£4.99/July 1996 ISSUE 40

PC ZONE

EXCLUSIVE!

Ugly as hell...
Meaner than a pitbull...
Thank God it's on your side...

FREE!
AH-64D Longbow Keyboard Overlay

...HMD

PREY
BETTER THAN QUAKE?
SEE PAGE 10

Duke Nukem 3D
First and only review of the *full* game

Broken Sword
British game steals LucasArts' thunder

Jetfighter III
One step closer to reality?

MDK
Murder! Death!! Kill!!!
page 24

Your CD is missing!
Ask your newsagent NOW!

SPECIAL! TERMINATOR FUTURE SHOCK OFFER!!!

FANTASTIC NEW GAME OFFER!
See page 92!

PlayStation

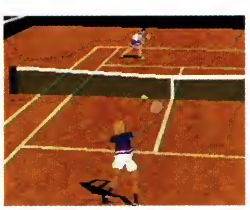
PC
CD-ROM
WIN'95™& DOS™

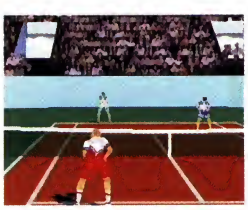
The smash, hit.

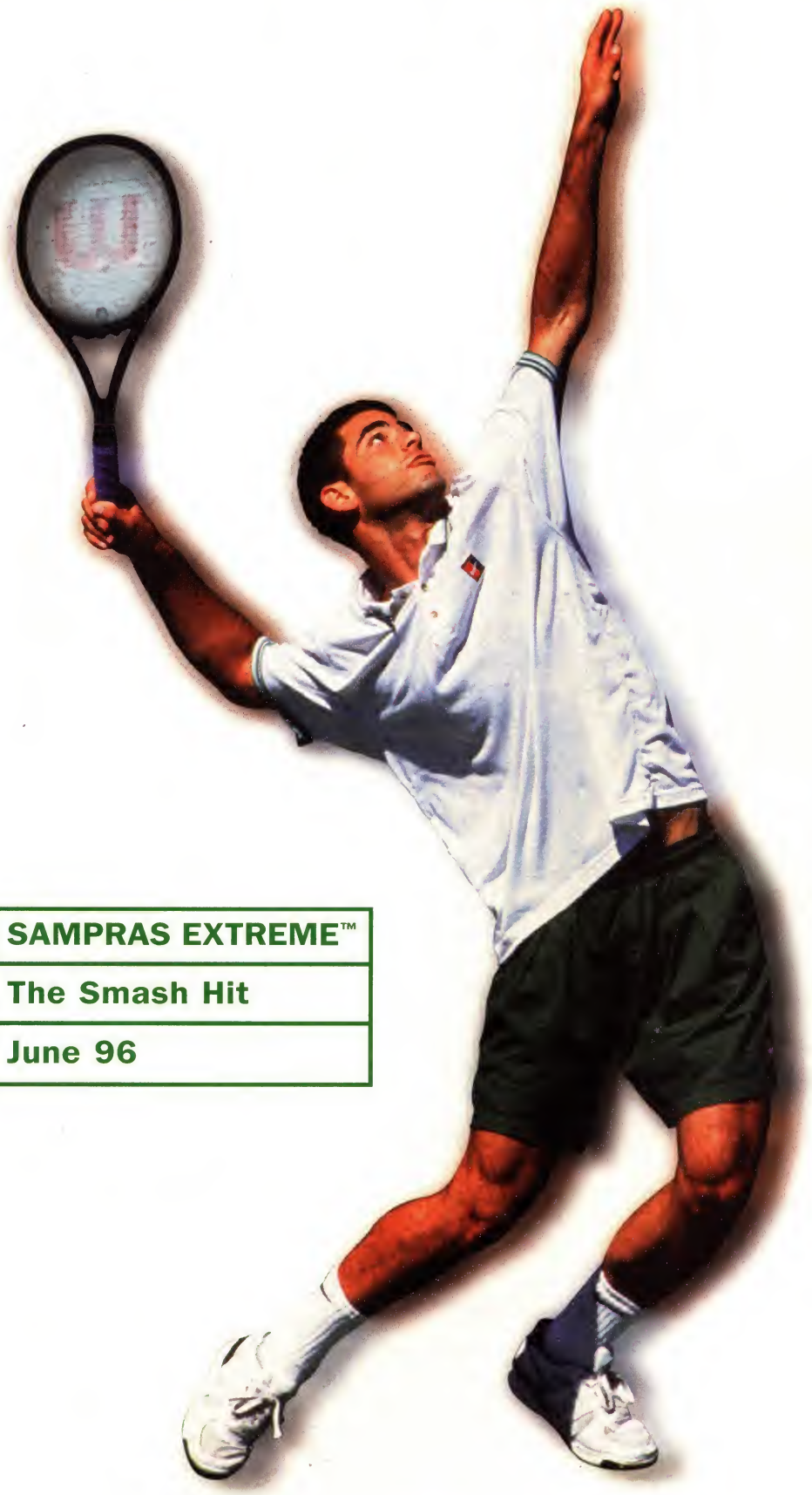
128mph bullet-serves in yer face - that's what it's all about. Get an extreme work out with Sampras Extreme, the all-action tennis arcade game that looks real, sounds real and feels real because it is real...

8 world stadiums, 22 intelligent motion-captured opponents, mathematically-accurate ball dynamics, fully sampled speech, sound fx and crowd atmospherics, camera action tracking and optimized viewpoints combine to deliver exhausting games, sets and matches.

Yeah, you can be a spectator at Wimbledon but, if you want experience how Sampras' opponents really feel, there's only one way to find out: Sampras Extreme, smashing into your living room in June.







#1	SAMPRAS EXTREME™
	The Smash Hit
	June 96

Sampras Extreme™

It's real.

Sportsmaster WORLD CLASS PLAYERS

Codemasters

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PC ZONE

Dennis

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PPA

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C:\>Cover Disk

HD DISK

Fighter Duel **on this month's HD disks runs from DOS. If you're running Windows 95 shut down your machine and re-start in DOS mode. Change to your floppy drive and run PCZONE.BAT. Once the game has unzipped to the chosen directory run SETSOUND.EXE to set up your sound card and run FD.BAT to play the game. For best results plug in your joystick and calibrate it before starting the demo mission.**

EXCLUSIVE!

Fighter Duel (Philips Media)
Don't ask us how, but the clever chaps at Philips managed to fit this 15MB flight simulation demo onto just two floppy disks, and it's here exclusively on *PC Zone*. This is basically a demo of the dogfights you'll encounter in the game itself and should really give you a feel for the flight engine and superb sounds. So what are you waiting for? Calibrate your joystick and get shooting – chocks away ginger!

(Above) A typically pretty plane from *Fighter Duel*...

(Left) ...and this is what they look like when you blow them up.

CD-ROM DISC

To access the veritable plethora of orgasmic playable demos on this *PC Zone* cover CD change to your CD-ROM drive letter and type <PCZONE>. The menu is easy to use and simply clicking on the icon of the demo you want to run with the left mouse button will launch the installer for it automatically. Just follow the on-screen instructions.

PLAYABLE DEMOS

EXCLUSIVE!

Settlers 2 (Blue Byte)
Massive playable demo of the sequel to Blue Byte's classic – we have *Settlers*. A full level for you to get your teeth stuck into. Your first job is to build your town hall which is the centre of the new settlement. From here click on the build icons and start construction of forester's houses and woodworkers. Connect these new buildings by road and watch the little cuties come out and start building your new town. From here it's up to you: expand your settlement by building new structures and take a good look around the surrounding countryside.

Get settling and watch your village grow into a town full of busy and violent diddy people.

Controls: Mouse
Specifications: 8Mb, SVGA

No CD?

If you are unable to get your grubby paws on the CD issue, then fear not! Simply fill out this slip, enclose your HD from the cover plus a cheque for a whole £1 and send it to:

Miles Tudor, CD Exchange (40), PC Zone, Dennis Publishing, 19 Bolsover St, London W1P 7HJ

Your details *(please print clearly)*

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Post code: .....

Please make cheques payable to:
DENNIS PUBLISHING Ltd
CDs from previous issues are also available.
Phone Miles on 0171-917 7693

(Left) *Settlers 2* is going to be one of this year's biggest releases. Find out why by playing our exclusive demo.

EXCLUSIVE!

Top Gun (MicroProse)

Don those Ray Bans and take to the wide blue yonder. This one's pretty big but mainly runs from the CD. Install the essential files and don't forget to plug in your joystick before the game is launched. We brought you the rolling demo a couple of months ago – now you can get stuck into this playable version.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick
Specifications: 8Mb, Windows 95 compatible

Gender Wars (SCI)

SCI get all sexy on us with man against woman for the right to rule! This is a fully playable level in which you choose your male or female squad and partake in the mission: which is basically to kill everything that doesn't stand still. Use the mouse to guide your team leader around the level and the troops will follow. During tough combat situations clicking on any of the other soldiers will give you control of them instead, although there's always the option of controlling them as one big team à la *Syndicate*. Amazing 3D isometric real-time action – uni-sex *Syndicate* for all.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Specifications: 8Mb

EXCLUSIVE!

Civilization 2 (MicroProse)

Yikes! Two brand new completely self-contained levels! You play Alexander the Great in the first pre-designed level, and your aim is to achieve the same goals as the great Greek hero and to try your hand at the Age of Discovery. MicroProse will be releasing these extra scenarios on a fairly regular basis now so keep your eyes peeled on the coming month's discs. Just load them into your *Civ 2* directory.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Specifications: 8Mb, copy of original game required

EXCLUSIVE!

Fozzie Demo (Ocean)

Fozzie Bear's missile command. Fozzie makes his way across the stage trying to get to the other side to tell his now world-famous gags – but the crowd are a little less forgiving of our furry friend from the '70s and constantly boo and hurl fruit and rotten veg at him. It's your job to 'shoot' the assorted missiles from the skies before it hits our hero and knocks him to the ground. This is a fully playable Muppet classic taken from the forthcoming *Muppet's* CD-ROM.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Specifications: Windows 3.x, 95, 8Mb

Congo (Viacom)

Check out this totally fab demo of Viacom's brand new adventure game. It's based on the movie of the same name and your objective is to head off into the depths of the Congo (surprise surprise) and hunt down some diamonds that someone stupidly lost. In our demo you can wander round the jungle, look at big gorillas (probably), point at various things and then 'click', at the same time marvelling at the wonderful graphics. Then go off and buy the game. Or something.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Specifications: 8Mb, Windows 3.1 or above

(Right) Take a sneak peek at Mindscape's fab new racing game *Megarace...*

(Left) ...before trying your hand at *Civilization 2*, one of the best games ever.

Help!

The CD not working? HD playing up? The PC's being a total bast? Don't worry – we're here to help. Just relax, chill out, have a cold shower and then phone the relevant help line:

HD DISK HELP

Phone Matthew on 01274 736990
Any week day between 9am and 4pm

CD-ROM HELP

Phone Miles Tudor on 0171-917 7693
Any week day between 11am and 6pm
(DO NOT phone earlier as your calls will NOT be answered)

If you are calling either help line, then please take note of the following points:

- If possible have your PC operating and near to the phone when you call.
- If this is not possible, note down as much relevant information as possible ie system type, sound card, RAM etc, plus the nature of the fault.
- Make sure you have a pen and paper to hand when you call to jot down the relevant info.

Top Gun Mission of the Month

(MicroProse)

The first in a monthly series of new missions. This month – Cuba! Take to the skies in this first challenging new mission. There's more to follow next month and at regular intervals. Keep your eyes peeled.

Controls: Keyboard
Specifications: 8Mb, copy of the original game required

Megarace 2 (Mindscape)

This is a first look at this awesome sequel. Sadly it's only a rolling demo that shows off the new car models and amazing scenery, but if it's anything to go by then we're in for a real treat. Keep an eye on the coming issues for a preview and a playable demo.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Specifications: 8Mb

(Top left) The patch on our CD should cure all your *CM2* blues.

(Below left) *TacOps:* if looks could kill, this wouldn't be killing anyone. Top game though.

Championship Manager 2 Patch (Domark)

Hooray! The long-awaited patch for this management classic has arrived and fixes most of the bugs that hundreds of people reported to Domark. Now you can stop ringing us up and asking when it's ready.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Specifications: Copy of the original game required

Xenophage (US Gold/Apogee)

Apogee's rather sexy looking beat 'em up hits final release at last. This is the full shareware version to follow up from the Beta release we gave you a couple of issues ago.

Controls: Keyboard, joystick
Specifications: 8Mb

EF2000 patch (Ocean/DID)

For all you air-heads here's the long-awaited patch for this classic simulator. Fixes all known bugs, dead! This should solve many of the problems you've rang our hot-line and complained about. It's not our fault you know!

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick
Specifications: Copy of the original game required

TacOps (Strategy Plus)

Er, as we told you last month this is really cool, but apparently it didn't work – oops! This playable wargame is a strategy fan's dream come true – and not a hex in sight! Check out our review on page 72.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse
Specifications: 8Mb

Big Red Racing (Domark)

A playable demo of the off-road classic – it didn't work last month so here it is again. Use the cursor keys to control the two cars and race to the chequered flag in this full level from the game. You'll need to install Direct X before it will work properly in Windows 95 but worry not, it's included in the install program. DOS users can install and run the demo in the usual way.

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick
Specifications: 8Mb, Windows 95 compatible

UTILITIES

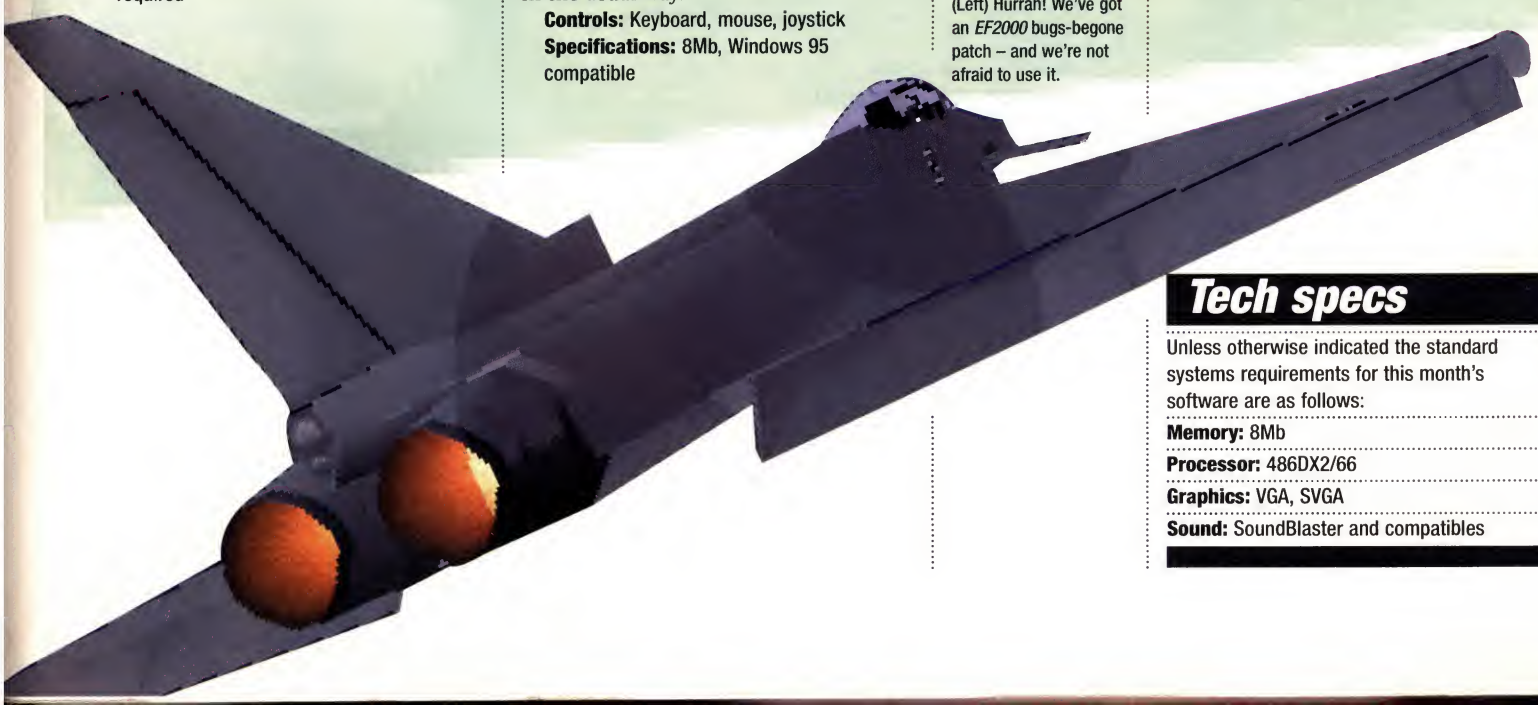
Tons of utilities for all your disc and file management requirements, including, at long last, the final version of WinZip 6.1 for Windows 95 and the usual bag of goodies to keep your hard disk in check.

INTERNET

A collection of all the best shareware and commercial on-line applications to help you get on-line – and stay there. Yet again *PC Zone* brings you free on-line time with Voss Net Internet software and access time, plus America On-line: free access to their service and the Internet. And that's as well as CompuServe v2.21 with free time and Internet access.

(Above) At last, a *Big Red Racing* demo that actually works. Oh joy, etc, etc.

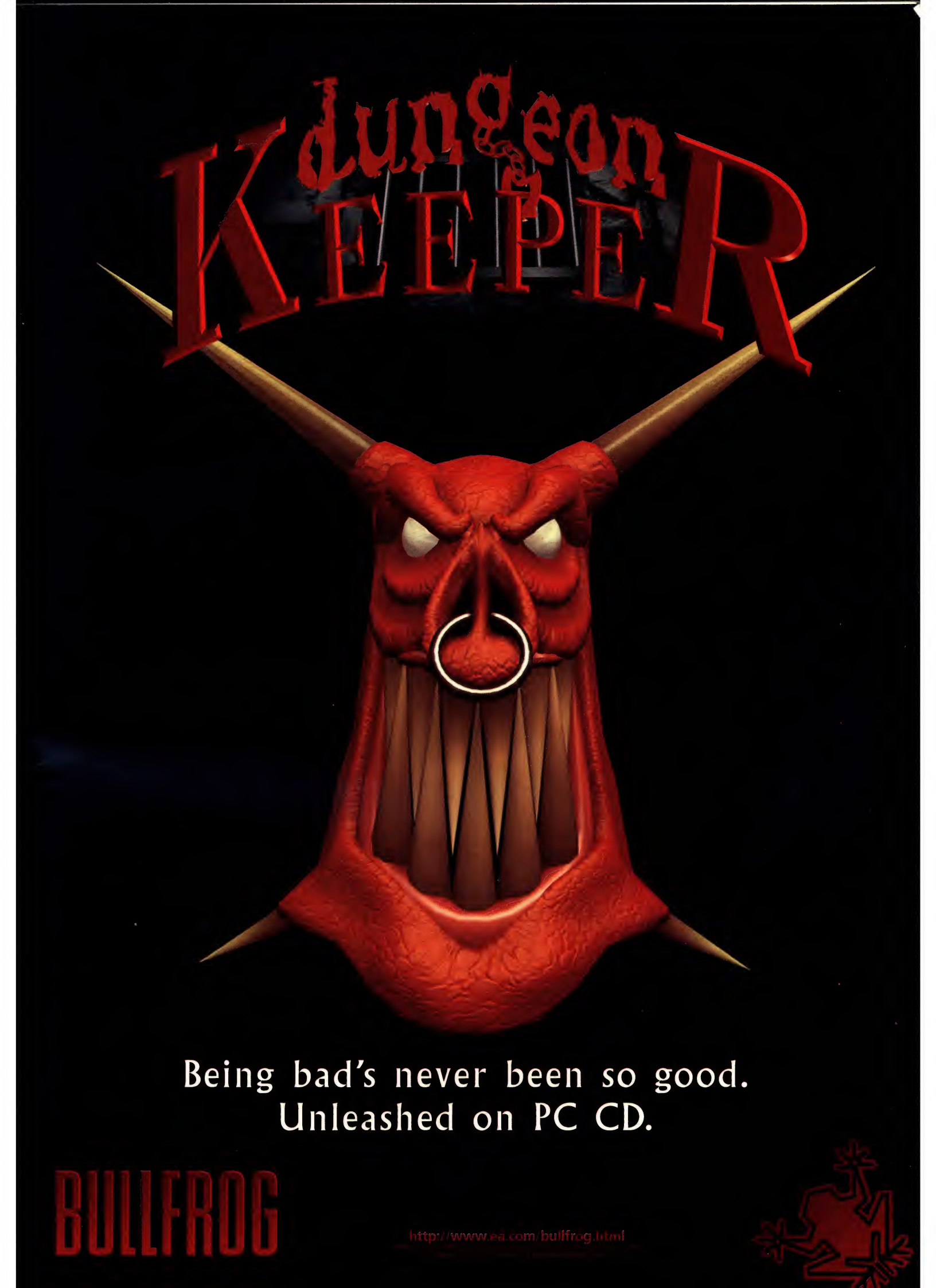
(Left) Hurrah! We've got an *EF2000* bugs-begone patch – and we're not afraid to use it.



Tech specs

Unless otherwise indicated the standard systems requirements for this month's software are as follows:

Memory: 8Mb
Processor: 486DX2/66
Graphics: VGA, SVGA
Sound: SoundBlaster and compatibles


dungeon
KEEPER
Being bad's never been so good.
Unleashed on PC CD.
BULLFROG
http://www.ea.com/bullfrog.html

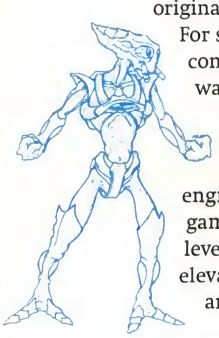
BULLETIN

Prey... better than Quake?

What's better? *Quake* or *Duke Nukem 3D*? Well, one thing's for sure, the chaps at 3D Realms don't really care any more. They've got something they reckon is better than both.

SPECIAL REPORT

ALTHOUGH they're pleased at how *Duke Nukem 3D* has been perceived as the first true successor to *Doom*, the bods at 3D Realms already know that the game they're currently working on is as superior to the current crop of 3D first-person shoot 'em ups as the original *Doom* was to *Wolfenstein*.



For starters, *Prey* uses a completely new engine that was developed from scratch. Far superior to the 'Build' technology used in *Duke*, it's a true 3D graphics engine that will allow the game's designers to create levels with multiple floors, elevated walkways and other architectural niceties that were impossible to include previously due to the constrictions imposed by less versatile and powerful engines. Furthermore, the new *Prey* engine will also be able to handle numerous dynamic light sources and soft-edged 'real-time' shadows that move and change naturally rather than simply flash on and off, which will serve to increase the sense of atmosphere in the game, but also help the player pinpoint their opponents during combat. And here's the best news of all: although it's still very early, the programmers at 3D Realms reckon that the engine will be able to sustain a full-on frame rate of around 25fps without the need of a 3D accelerator card on a modest Pentium. Apparently, their lighting and shadow routines are so complex that 3D accelerator cards wouldn't be able to handle them anyway(!), so let's hope they get it right.

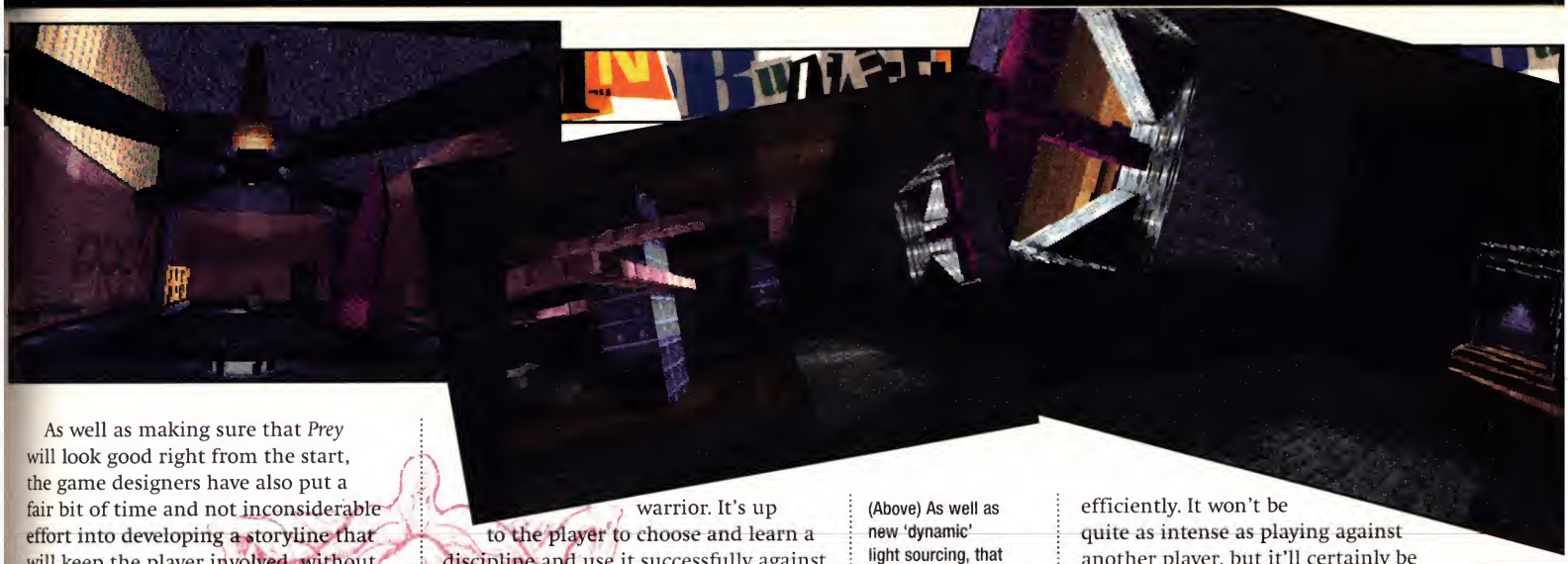
(Right) The all-new engine will allow the designers (and eventually the player) to really go to town. Your character will be able to look up and down and have a free-moving 'virtual' head so you can really take in the true 3D environment.

Scavenger run Amok

We've just had a sneak preview of a game that's looking very cool indeed. *Amok* from Scavenger takes the 'control a big robot' theme used in *Earthsiege* and *MechWarrior*, casts away the boring bits, and brings you an incredible-looking, arcade-based, *Doom*-type slugfest where the player gets to run around in a big metal thing.

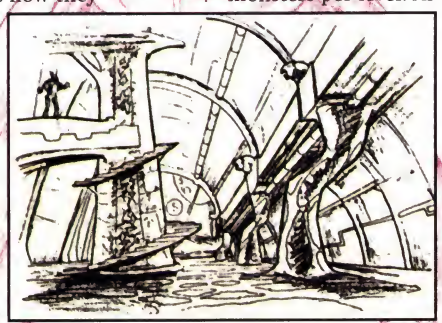
After playing an early version of the game non-stop, we can assure you that it already looks amazing and it's not even anywhere near finished yet; the final version will run in full-screen 16-bit colour and is set to run even faster. Although it's still early days, developers Scavenger maintain that *Amok* will sport massive levels featuring a wide variety of different types of terrain, and assure us that there will be many different buildings and enemies to blow up. We don't have much idea as to what the plot is yet, but to be honest, when a game looks, feels and plays this good, the plot takes second place. We'll bring you more info on this little gem next month.

(Below) If this is the shape of things to come from Scavenger, we can't wait 'til next year.

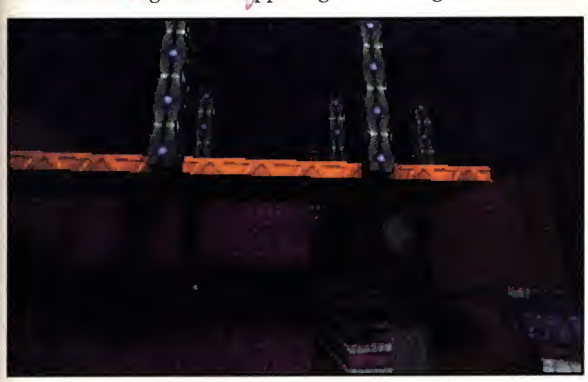


As well as making sure that *Prey* will look good right from the start, the game designers have also put a fair bit of time and not inconsiderable effort into developing a storyline that will keep the player involved, without restricting how the game may develop.

A race of extra-terrestrial overlords have kidnapped various alien warriors from around the galaxy in order to pit them against each other in 'gladiator-style' combat. The objective of the overlords appears to be to study the different fighting styles of the captured warriors, analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each of the martial disciplines and assess how they square up to each other. Presumably to make way for some kind of master plan that involves ruling the universe. You play the part of the human captor, who must take on each of the other captives in a fight to the death. The overlords have defined six different martial disciplines (made up of different kinds of weapons and styles of fighting) which the player must learn and use against an opposing warrior. It's up to the player to choose and learn a discipline and use it successfully against their opponent. Once you've mastered each choice of weapon and tactics (and knocked off the necessary opposing disciples), you'll then have to take on the masters of all the disciplines at once in a final battle to the death.



In an effort to make the game different from all the other shoot and run *Doom*-style titles, there will be a maximum of only a dozen or so monsters per level. As well as keeping the frame rate up, this will force the player to adopt certain strategies instead of simply charging in, guns blazing. In order to make the foe warriors react intelligently to what the player does, the guys at 3D Realms have been working on a complex new AI system that they hope will mirror what would happen in a good deathmatch battle. As a result, enemies will retreat if they're taking too many hits, regroup, give chase and even lie in wait, just like 'real' human players. They'll also have access to the same weapons, take the same damage and 'learn' the level they're operating in so they can move around it more efficiently. It won't be quite as intense as playing against another player, but it'll certainly be the closest thing yet.



(Above) As well as new 'dynamic' light sourcing, that allows for realistic 'soft-edged' shadows, *Prey* will sport coloured lights and network play for up to 25 players with a server (10-15 on a standard network set-up).

(Left) Some of the levels will even have ropes(!), but these haven't been designed yet.

As if that wasn't enough, the design team want to give the player as much control over the game's mechanics as possible so that players will be able to create their own game worlds. Thanks to a new modular game structure, gamers will be able to customise everything from the amount of damage a certain weapon does to the way a level looks by tweaking or even replacing the original in-game stats and other parameters with the aim of making *Prey* the most user-modifiable game ever released. If all goes to plan, a Windows 95-compatible level editor will come with the full registered version of the title so that players will be able to start designing their own levels as soon as the game is finished.

Look out *Quake*, suddenly there's a new kid on the block and he's looking for a big piece of the action. A shareware version of *Prey* is expected early next year.

Marvel from Mindscape

Mindscape and Marvel Comics are working together on a number of CD-ROM products featuring all the heroes from the 2099 Comic Series.

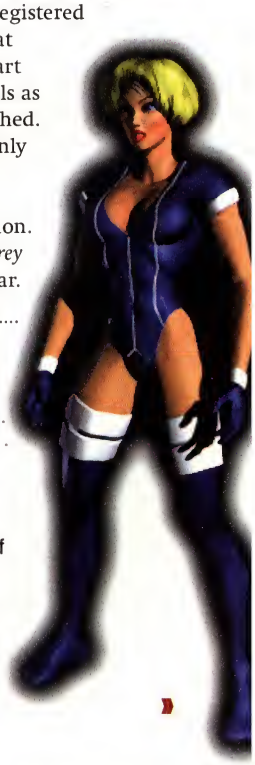
Marvel 2099, the first game in the series, stars many of the heroes from the comics including Ghost Rider, Punisher, Daredevil, Hulk, and lots of other famous fantasy bods.

There will be two different level types in the game: side-scrolling levels in which you 'biff', 'twonk' and 'clonk' your foes in the usual way, and levels that give you a first-person 3D view of the action. In these levels you will be flying about in cyberspace, looking for interesting and useful stuff, and solving lots of puzzles.

(Right) If only all super-heroes looked as good in a leotard.

(Left) Just don't spill the Hulk's pint if you see him in the pub, okay?

The game is some way off at the moment (it probably won't be out until at least September), but you can be sure we'll be keeping a close eye on it to see how it's coming along.



(Left) Do the monsters in *Quake* shave their armpits? Maybe we'll find out when the full version is released sometime next century.

"Quakers now have an axe to grind

AFTER MONTHS OF SPECULATION AND RUMOUR, ID have let slip that there *will* be hand-to-hand combat in *Quake* as originally envisaged.

When the *Deathmatch Test* was made available two months ago, one of the few criticisms made was that there was no hand-to-hand combat as previously promised. This prompted a massive "*Quake* is just *Doom 3*" backlash, as people feared that *Quake* would be yet another first-person shoot 'em up, albeit visually impressive.

Although iD stressed that the *Deathmatch Test* version of *Quake* was just that: a test version to show people how the final *Deathmatch* game might work, people immediately assumed that the lack of any handheld weapons and blokes with beards meant that the original vision of *Quake* being a fantasy hack-fest was, in every sense of the word, doomed.

Whether iD always intended to implement hand-to-hand combat at a later date, or have reacted to the mass hysteria remains unclear. However, sources very close to iD now maintain that the version of *Quake* they are currently working on includes a battle axe that players will be able to wield when they run out of ammo.

Quite how the hand-to-hand combat will work is as yet to be decided, but it is thought that iD may opt for a mouse-driven hack and parry style affair that will give the player greater fluidity of movement, coupled with a vast array of attacking and blocking moves.

As far as the rest of the game is concerned, reports suggest that the shareware version of *Quake* is unlikely to be with us before June(!), and that iD are currently working on a new modular weapon system while they deliberate on what the final two weapons will be.

Whether the player will have access to spells or 'special powers' is as yet unconfirmed, as is the potential availability of cloaks, pointy shoes and the option of playing as a character with a beard.

(Above) I wonder if he's got a beard under that sheet?

(Left) The Deputy Ed's attempt at disco dancing caused much laughter in the *Zone* offices.

(Right) Heeer's Wilbur escaping the killer gerbils in *Orion Burger*.

Road Rash for Windows 95

The racing game that wowed 3DO owners (and is currently doing the rounds on the PlayStation) is coming to the PC very soon.

In case you didn't know already, *Road Rash* is basically all about driving expensive motorcycles really, really fast and biffing anyone who gets in your way. The game is played out over a series of races in which you compete with other riders, and your aim is to hopefully finish in the first three and win loads of cash. You can then use your loot to buy better bikes and equipment for use in the next race. As well as fantastically smooth graphics, there are loads of FMV sequences in the game showing 'well 'ard' bikers zooming around the place and being suitably anarchic and loopy.

The original version of the game was extremely addictive and took real advantage of the 3DO's graphic capability, so let's hope the PC version is just as good (or, dare we say it, even better).

Road Rash should be in the shops in July. We'll bring you a full review as soon as we get our mitts on a finished copy of the game. Contact EA on 01753 549442 for more information.

Orion Burger

Orion Burger, US Golds' forthcoming adventure game, puts you in a role you've never had to play before in a computer game: saving the human race from certain extinction (ahem).

So what's up this time? Well, a bunch of aliens are making a fortune out of chopping up the human race and using us as the main ingredient for their highly popular Orion Burgers. You play Wilbur, an unfortunate dude who has been taken hostage by the aliens as a test subject. If Wilbur can prove that humans are actually quite clever and don't deserve to die, then the aliens will stop slicing us up and mashing us into burger meat. Your objective in the game then, is to display cleverness at all times by solving all the puzzles you come across (hardly Steven Spielberg is it?).

We had a sneaky peek at the game and it looks quite nice graphically, though it has to be said the puzzles seemed a little bit fussy. As ever, we'll reserve judgement until we see the finished product. The game will hopefully be out in September. For more info call US Gold on 0121-625 3388.

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STORMFRONT STUDIOS

LucasArts' summer line-up

(Above) Sadly, no one will play frisbee in the sequel to *Dark Forces*.

Just a bit more on the LucasArts releases we told you about last month to keep you bang up to date.

It's looking likely that *Jedi Knight* (which in case you didn't know is the multi-player sequel to *Dark Forces*) will follow the same successful formula of the original game, with a few notable improvements.

For starters, it seems that the engine is shaping up to be a lot faster and as a result the graphics will be more detailed, with a hi-res mode now almost certain to be an option. Whether LucasArts will opt for a true 3D environment populated with 3D polygonal characters (similar to that used in *Quake* and *Prey*) remains undecided, although they haven't ruled out the prospect of making *Jedi Knight* compatible with one of the much-hyped 3D accelerator cards which would allow the developers more scope to work some graphical wizardry.

LucasArts have confirmed that as well as featuring a multi-player network option, players will at last get to wield a light-sabre and indulge in a little thrust and parry for the first time. However, quite how the hand-to-hand combat will be implemented, and whether players will be able to play the *Jedi Knight* as a multi-player team game of 'Storm Troopers' versus 'Rebel Scum' is yet to be decided. Smart money is of the opinion that they will see how iD handle the battle axe hand-to-hand combat in *Quake* (see item on previous page), and if it's well received, modify it to suit their needs.

Whether LucasArts will actively market *Jedi Knight* with their other big release, *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*, as a side-by-side package is also unclear, though the developers maintain that fans should not rule out the possibility of the two games being linked either by way of plot and storyline (which is more likely), or by implementing a feature that will allow players to move from game to game and still remain within the same *Star Wars* universe.

(Left and below) *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter* – who's side will you be on?

Dispatches

+++ Zork TV

Activision have just announced an agreement with Threshold Entertainment to develop the *Zork* universe for television in the US. Although the program format is yet to be decided, an animated series looks likely while a live-action fantasy show in the style of Xena and Hercules is also on the cards. Activision are also keen to convert both *Pitfall* and the more recent *Spycraft* to a televisual/film format, but so far the idea hasn't got past the 'green light' stage.

+++ Rocket Science try again

The much-hyped development team known as Rocket Science have dusted themselves down after releasing quite possibly the worst games ever *(Wing Nuts* and *Loadstar)* and started again. Their new project, entitled *Ganymede,* is yet another shoot 'em up, but this time Rocket Science claim that the player will have complete freedom of movement over the broken terrain of Jupiter's moon. Bet you can't wait 'til March 1997 when *Ganymede* is due for release...?

+++ ATI for IBM

ATI Technologies have just signed a deal to supply IBM with its 3D RAGE accelerator chip for use in its new Aptiva range. The 3D RAGE chip is capable of producing full-screen MPEG1 video playback as well as fast-action 3D 65,000 high-resolution colour graphics. So far, the only developer to take advantage of the card's impressive capabilities has been Activision, who recently released an enhanced version of *MechWarrior 2.*

+++ Kixx budget offer

Budget label Kixx have hit back with a great new offer in an attempt to get you to part with your hard-earned. If you buy any two of their budget titles (which normally retail for around a tenner) you get a third budget game absolutely free. The 'free' games on offer are *Battle Of Britain, Loom, Pirates, Cruise For A Corpse, Wings Of Gold, King's Quest IV, Police Quest I* and *III* and *Space Quest.* Contact US Gold on 0121-625 3388 for further details.

+++ Thingies (huh-huh)

Viacom are riding high on the back of the Beavis and Butt-head phenomenon. Their new Beavis and Butt-head game *Little Thingies* is not a point-and-click adventure, but a collection of highly amusing 'mini' games starring the delectable duo. If you've played the first game (or the demo which appeared on our cover CD a couple of months ago) you'll know exactly what you're in for. *Little Thingies* should be available in the autumn.

See the difference Voxel Space 2 makes...

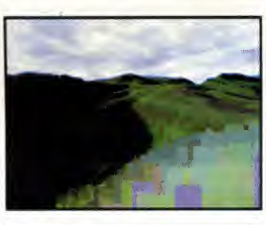
Novalogic have just announced three new products that will utilise their all-new Voxel Space 2 technology.

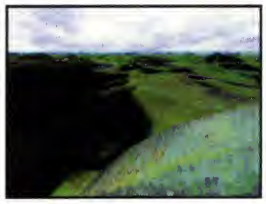
The new and improved 3D environment-generating engine is visibly better than the original Voxel Space technology (see screenshots) which was first used in the best-selling helicopter sim *Comanche* back in 1992 (and again in *Armored Fist*, Novalogic's battle tank simulation). Voxel Space 2 takes full advantage of the improved processing power of new hardware and offers an unprecedented level of detail, freedom of movement and fluidity when running on a Pentium with 16Mb of RAM.

The first release to use the new engine will be *Comanche 3*, a combat sim based on the RAH-66 Comanche attack helicopter, due to hit the shelves in October. As well as featuring improved graphics and a highly detailed terrain, the game will support up to eight players over a network, and will boast all of the weaponry and capabilities found in the US Army's 21st century helicopter.

Armored Fist 2 will be the second release to utilise the new technology and benefit from the improved 3D terrain generating engine. As Voxel Space 2 works more effectively from a ground-up perspective than the original Voxel Space engine, the sequel will feature highly detailed texture-mapped polygon objects and air targets which will scale efficiently regardless of their proximity to the player's perspective (something the original game did have a bit of a problem with). As well as improved graphics, *Armored Fist 2* will support eight-way network and modem play and will feature fully researched and accurately portrayed military hardware, including the M1A2 battle tank.

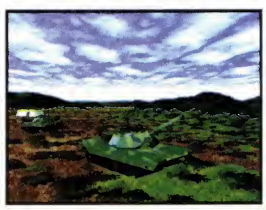
Finally, there's the rather oddly entitled *Dirty Racing*, which is presumably some kind of off-road racing sim endorsed by Patrick Swayze. Little is known about the project as yet, although we wouldn't mind betting that *Dirty Racing* will feature eight-player network support and detailed in-yer-face graphics.

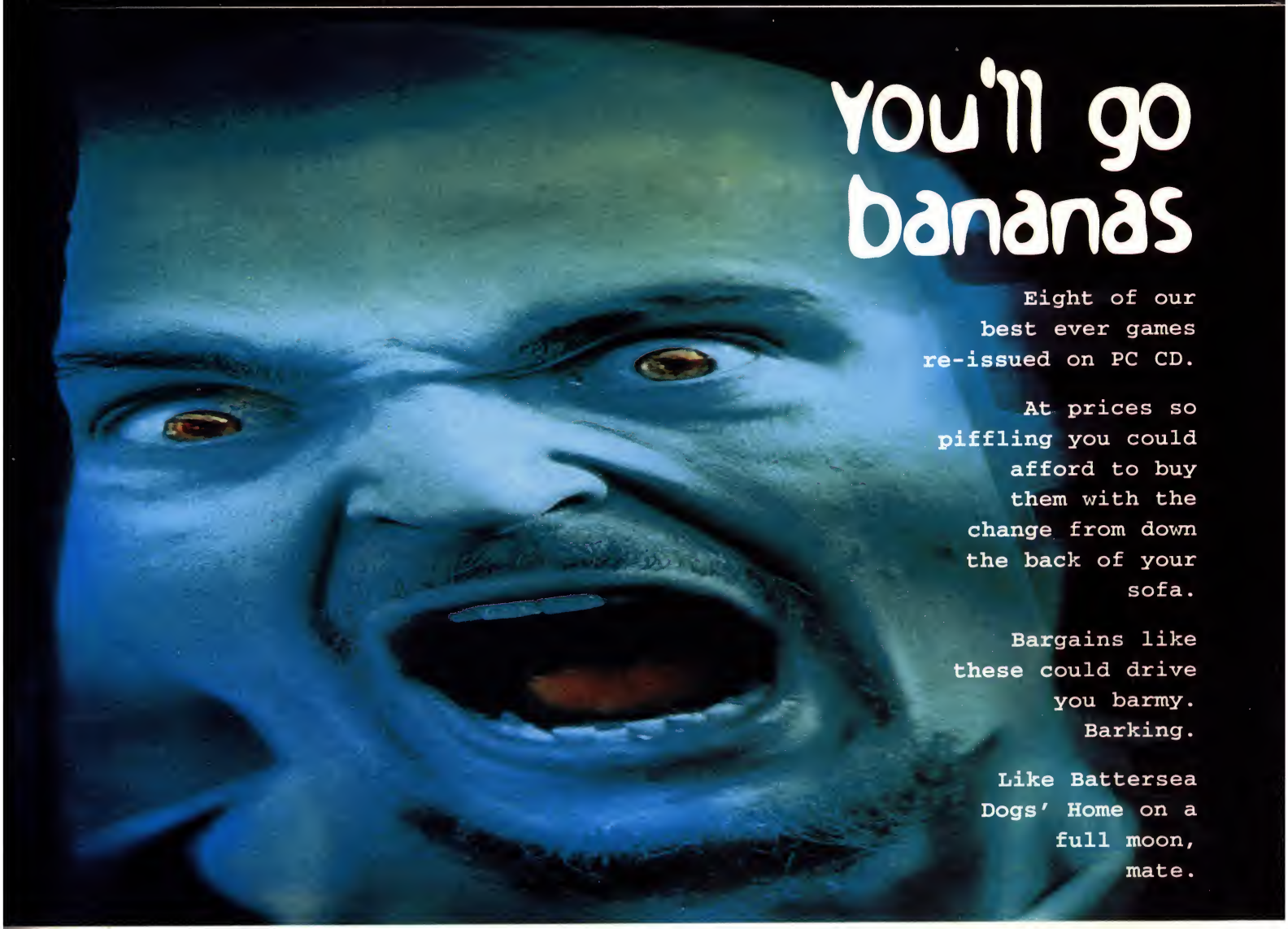




(Above) See the difference Voxel Space 2 makes...? It really shows how blocky the first Voxel Space engine really was, doesn't it?

(Below) *Armored Fist 2* already looks far superior to the chunky original – just check out those lovely, fluffy clouds.





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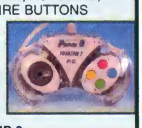

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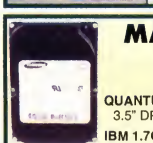

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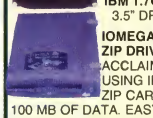

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Wait and see for Direct3D?

(Below) *Quake* should be a smoother experience thanks to 3D accelerators.

(Centre) PowerVR works differently from the other 3D chips; it should be cheaper too.

Dispatches

+++ Microsoft thrive on feedback
Microsoft have just acquired Exos, manufacturers of force feedback technolgy. As a result we can expect to see a new SideWinder-style joystick that will attempt to jump out of your hand every time you hit some turbulence, take a hit or drive your F1 car into a brick wall. Microsoft have also been busy developing the SideWinder Game Pad (pictured above). Although the pad will only work with Windows 95 games (including those running in a DOS window), it will sport six buttons, an eight-way cross-key pad and two 'shoulder' buttons. You'll also be able to connect up to four of the controllers simultaneously. The SideWinder gamepad is due for release in the autumn.

+++ Gold go for gold
US Gold are busy at work on their all-new track and field game to use the Atlanta Olympics license. *Olympic Games* will offer the most comprehensive event listing for a multi-sports game ever: 100m, 400m, Long Jump, Triple Jump, High Jump, Pole Vault, Discus, Javelin, Hammer, Swimming, Rapid Fire Pistol, Skeet, Archery, Weightlifting (!) and Fencing. The game will support up to eight players over a network and features a true 3D engine and polygonal, texture-mapped athletes. *Olympic Games* is due for release in July.

+++ Pong to the rescue
Nolan Bushnell, the creator of *Pong* and held by many as the grandfather of video games, has lashed out at the current state of arcade games. Bushnell recently commented that coin-ops were too violent and soley aimed at teenage boys, who make up only a small part of the population. In an attempt to redress the situation, Bushnell is currently working on a new series of arcade games that will feature "good, clean family fun". Details of the games have yet to be released, although it's thought that they will have a strong sports theme.

+++ Dick Special
Philip Marlowe Private Eye is a new graphically lush point-and-click adventure very much in the *Full Throttle* style. Based on Raymond Chandler's classic mystery novel *The Little Sister*, it's a 3D tale of murder, greed and betrayal, that you (the young Philip Marlowe) must make sense of. If it plays as good as it looks, then Viacom could be onto a real winner.

You saw it here first — HARDWARE UPDATE

3D accelerator cards are the most eagerly awaited upgrades in PC gaming, but so far no games developers have really taken advantage of what the cards will offer and most Windows 95 games have been little more than an underwhelming affair.

The problem so far has been one of compatibility. Some companies have already released their own 3D accelerator cards (notably Diamond Multimedia) and although few software publishers have released compliant versions of their games, the attitude of developers has very much been one of 'wait and see' until an industry standard is in place.

This is about to change, however, as Microsoft have just shipped beta versions of Direct3D (a very clever piece of software that will automatically look at the hardware in your machine, work out which accelerator card has been installed, and as long as the right drivers are present, perform graphical miracles on your PC). As a result, we should start to see some impressive Windows 95 games in the next few months that automatically take advantage of the 3D accelerator card phenomenon and eradicate the worry of compatibility problems that have been holding this area of development up.

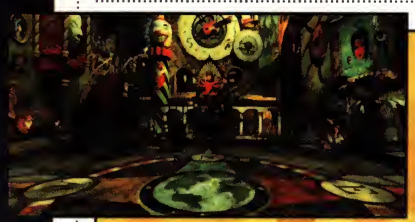
As well as the massive headache of compatibility, the problem so far with Windows 95 titles has really been down to the games themselves and not the new operating system. Up until now games designed to run under Windows 95 have not been able to take advantage of all Windows 95 game-related features because a fully working and stable version of Direct3D was not made available to games developers. Consequently, the PC has been left trailing behind the PSX and Saturn, but this is now about to change as PC owners begin to upgrade their machines this summer when Direct3D starts to take hold.

As you'd expect, all the major card manufacturers are keen to stress to the games-buying public that their card will be the one to buy because it's totally Direct3D compatible.

Diamond Multimedia have promised that their all-new Stealth 3D 2000 card due out very soon (which will come bundled with *Descent 2, Destruction Derby* and *Terminal Velocity*) will provide their customers with the appropriate drivers as soon as Microsoft's Direct3D APIs are ready. By the same token Rendition Inc maintain that their new Verite 3D chips will fully support Microsoft's Direct3D, and as a result, Microsoft have given Rendition a significant boost by stating that the Verite chip will be the "3D hardware acceleration design reference platform", even going so far to include the Verite device drivers on the beta version of Direct3D.

Not to be outdone, VideoLogic and Japanese giants NEC, the two companies behind the PowerVR 3D accelerator chip have just announced that their baby will be ready to ship by the summer. Unlike the accelerator cards, the PowerVR solution is a single chip that is designed to be used in graphics cards or built into motherboards. PowerVR already supports Microsoft's Direct3D and RealityLab which means that any game written in the future that complies to the new Microsoft standard will be enhanced by the new chip. At the moment there are no details on price, but with NEC's massive chip manufacturer capabilities, the price is likely at worst to be very competitive. A PowerVR console is also on the cards for later next year.

+++STOP PRESS+++
Just as we go to press it has just been confirmed that Compaq will be using the PowerVR chipset on-board in their new Presario range of PCs. More news next month.



9

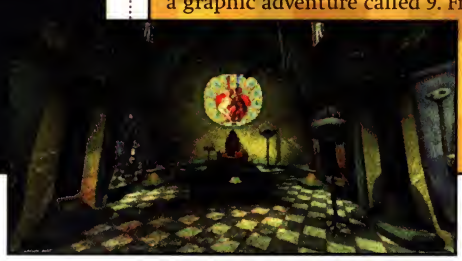
Have you ever wondered what Robert De Niro gets up to in his spare time? No? Well neither have we, but we're going to tell you anyway.

Bob is busy building a movie empire of his very own with his company Tribeca Films. To further capitalise on Bob's proposed monopoly of the entertainment world, the film company has an off-shoot called Tribeca Interactive, a computer games company.

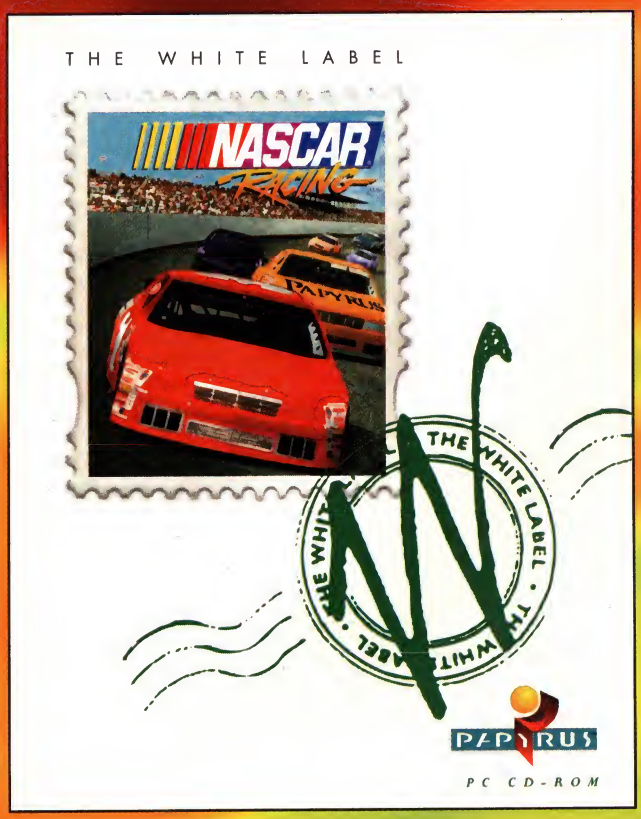
The first game we will see from these chaps is a graphic adventure called *9*. From what we've seen, the game looks very smart indeed. Featuring some gorgeous graphics, *Nemesis*-style turn-all-aroundy movement, and voice-overs from Cher, Christopher Reeve and Aerosmith(!).

As far as the plot goes, you play a happening muso dude who has inherited a famous leisure world called 'The Last Resort' from his uncle. Unfortunately, the place is in a bit of a mess. The 'muse machine', a device which gives the island its 'magical opulence', is not working. You need to find all the components, pop them into the machine and restore the world to order.

9 has some pretty snazzy puzzles, and boasts impressive presentation. We look forward to bringing you more on this next month but in the meantime, call GT Interactive on 0171-258 3791 for more information.



not all things white are pure



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AT HOME WITH...

INTERACTIVE MAGIC

A long time ago in an industry far, far away, one man shaped the very notion of what PC flight sims should be. Paul Presley journeyed to North Carolina to find out just why he's doing it all over again.

THERE'S A CERTAIN NOSTALGIC fondness that comes over me whenever I hear the name 'Wild' Bill Stealey. Stealey was the man who founded MicroProse, the company that popularised the flight sim with games like *F-15 Strike Eagle* and *Gunship*, and who almost single-handedly laid down the template for every successful software house to follow. But Stealey's MicroProse was in many ways more than just a software house; it was, to coin a phrase, a family. Not only would his employees enjoy themselves at work, so too would 'Wild' Bill, driven by his love of flying, his passion for games and his boundless enthusiasm – and it was this energy that shone through in the software they produced.

I remember getting hold of a brand new copy of *Gunship* or *Silent Service II* as a kid and being barely able to contain my excitement while ripping off the cellophane to get at the wondrously detailed contents. It helped, of course, that the games were being designed by pioneers such as Sid Meier and that each release was little short of a miracle.

Games tester supreme

Now, over a decade later and following a two-year hiatus and a split from MicroProse, 'Wild' Bill is back with a new company called Interactive Magic. And as any visitor to their offices will remark, that old Stealey energy is back in force. "I think I'm one of the few guys in the industry that's a hard-core gamer," he boasts when compared to other chairmen. "When I took the two years off, my daily schedule would be to get up, take a run, go to the range and play golf, go to an Italian restaurant to have dinner, come home and play computer games. And all the time I'd be thinking, 'How can I improve them?' I played more games in that time off than I had in the two years before – and that was because once MicroProse became big I'd be playing the games less and less because there were just so many of them. When I started I would play every single one – I was their chief playtester."

One of the key aims of Interactive Magic, at least for Bill, is to stick to the kind of games he does best – flight sims and strategy. "I know what's good in those areas. When MicroProse started doing all those other types of game, I didn't have a clue whether they were any good or not. I had to depend on everyone else. We invented probably six to eight games that, had I really understood them, I wouldn't have produced. That ain't gonna happen here."

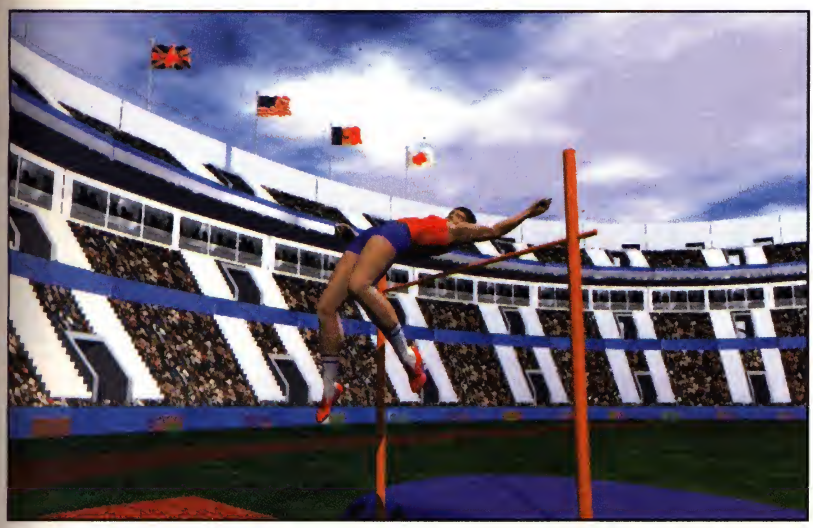
Interactive Magic was founded when Bill's friend Bob Pickens, ex-steel manufacturer and now IM's co-chairman, came to him looking for a new venture. "We came to North

(Above right) World-building in *Destiny*. Could this be a metaphor for the direction Bill is heading with IM? Probably not.

(Right) "MicroProse? Who are they?" Bill and Bob share a joke.

F-22

One of the most eagerly-awaited of IM's upcoming titles is the *F-22* simulator. Apart from being a totally realistic representation of the top-secret, experimental, next-generation fighter planes, the game incorporates some of the most authentic terrain we've seen. Taken directly from US Department of Defence satellite photographs, each of *F-22's* game areas is an accurately mapped simulation of the real thing. Just try to imagine *Flight Unlimited*-style graphics but with proper contours and guns to fire. Unfortunately the game is so top secret that we're not allowed to show you any pictures of it yet but in the meantime, here's 'Wild' Bill enjoying a brief flight.



(Left) Decathlon represents IM's collaboration with Holy Mackerel! Media (see last month's Blueprint).

Carolina mainly to find Bob something to move into, but we couldn't find anything interesting. Then two weeks later he came to me with a four-page paper on how he wanted to start an entertainment software company."

At the time Bill was under a non-competitive contract with MicroProse which prevented him from forming any kind of rival company. Luckily a loophole in the deal meant that although he couldn't start one himself, he was allowed to invest money in someone else's project. Bob figured that since there were only six months left to run on the contract, he'd get Bill to invest some of his cash and then invite him to join the board when the agreement expired. In the meantime Bob was free to get Interactive Magic up and running without having to deal with Bill's infamous lack of administrative skills.

"Bob got IM started in July 1994," Bill recounts, "and I wasn't allowed to do anything but give him money until December that year, which is when I went down to the office and said, 'Hey, I'm here!' As much as I loved playing golf, it just wasn't as exciting as the games industry and I was getting bored. I figured I could either buy a restaurant chain or get back in the business. So here I am – I'm back and I intend to build another world-class company."

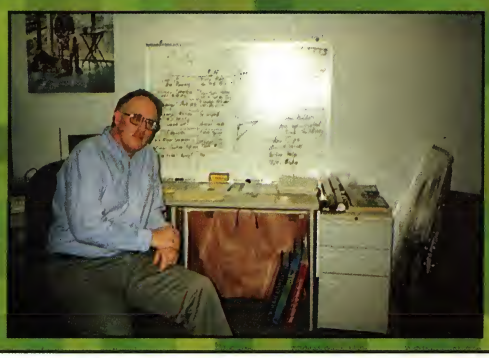
And why not? Chances are, in ten year's time you'll need a 'Wild' Bill company of your own to get nostalgic over. **Z**

Destiny

Destiny looks set to blow god games like *Civilization 2* out of the water. Allowing players to take their tribes from stone age times right through to the space age and beyond, there will be options for solo, head-to-head and network battles. It scores over *Civilization* mainly in the presentation – everything is viewed in a polygon-based 3D arena, including battles (which are fought out *Zarach*-style). There's even a cool 'espionage' feature that allows you to spy on other players' secret messages to one another. Intrigue, godly powers and 3D? Can't wait.

iM1A2 Abrams

Still in the early stages of development, *Abrams* is being worked on by none other than Arnold Hendricks, the designer of the original *M1 Tank Platoon*. Anyone who remembers the MicroProse ground-breaker will have a pretty good idea of what to expect here, except that this version promises to be packed full of realistic features, including brand new weapons (some of which don't actually exist yet – how's that for a hark back to the old 'Prose days?) and some stunningly good graphics. No more flat boxes with rotating sticks on the top – these babies look as much like the real thing as today's graphical routines will allow (which is pretty close). As with *F-22*, we can't show you any pictures of the game yet, but here's one of Arnold and his design board. *(Lovely – Ed.)*

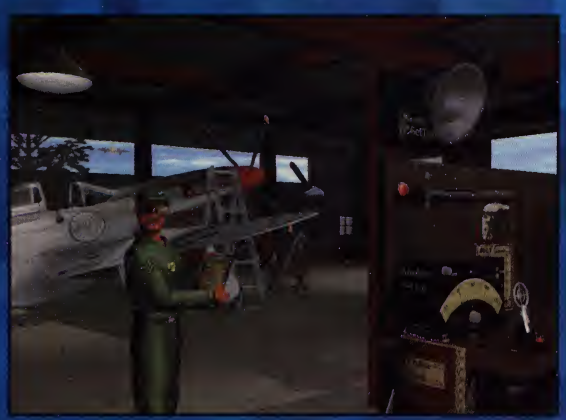


The American Civil War

The American Civil War provides strategy buffs with the chance to tinker with history and ensure that the righteous British troops manage to quash the famous battle for independence in the Colonies, allowing us to retain control of our once mighty empire, just as it should be. (*Ahem – Ed.*) Oh, all right. Based on a previously unreleased (except through mail order) Canadian wargame, *TACW* allows you complete control over the famous battle, with a level of realism unmatched by any wargame to date. It includes an on-line encyclopaedia about the conflict, just so that you can pretend it's an educational tool as well. Cool.

Air Warrior II

The original *Air Warrior* was something of a novelty. Although the actual flight sim wasn't particularly advanced, it was supported by a fully on-line service that allowed players from all over America to fly against each other, not unlike the *Doom* servers of today. Naturally 'Wild' Bill is something of an addict (he even has his own flight command on-line), so when someone mentioned a sequel, he leapt at the chance to sign it up. *Air Warrior II* is going to be both a standalone flight sim and an on-line challenge, allowing players to fly a vast number of aircraft dating from the First World War right up to the Vietnam period. The game works much like the classic *Chuck Yeager's Air Combat* but, as you can see, it has vastly improved graphics. With the on-line feature providing the challenge of playing against other people, it all looks very promising indeed.



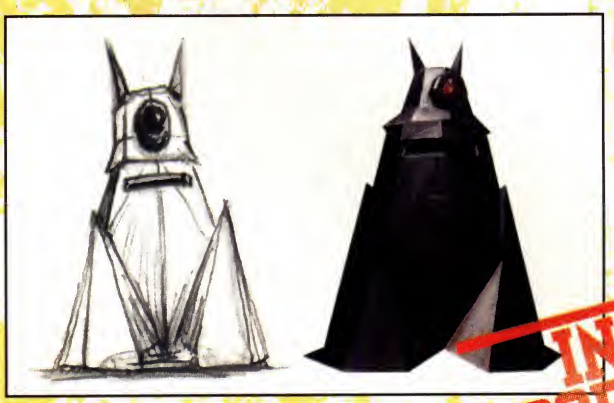
MDK: Murder Death Kill

Super-smooth 3D action in real time? Yep, and you can blow your enemies away limb by limb too. In fact, Charlie Brooker was so over-excited that he's been under strong sedation ever since.

(Above right) Once the sneezing fit had subsided, Kurt realised he'd inadvertently shot three people dead... from the other side of the city.

(Right) Kurt lines up a sentry for a little target practice.

(Below) If K-9 ever shagged a Dalek, the resultant offspring would probably look something like one of *MDK's* 'guard' monsties.



Product details

Developer: Shiny Productions
Publisher: Interplay
Telephone: 01628 423666
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: Christmas 96

SNAPPY TITLE, EH? ANY GAME WITH A moniker like that is just begging to be looked at. *Murder Death Kill* (or *MDK* as it's 'officially' known), is the first PC-specific action title to spring forth from the US-based Shiny Productions team. It's also one of the most impressive-looking games it's been my privilege to witness in recent months.

In case the name 'Shiny' seems a little familiar, allow me to elucidate (I promise not to spill any on the pillows this time). Shiny are headed up by Dave Perry, which is yet another name to set some possible bells ringing. A few years ago, 'wor Dave' was the guiding light behind many a successful console title (*Aladdin* and *Cool Spot*, to name but two). Having acquired his fortune, he left the numbing climate of Britain far behind and skedaddled his stuff to California's Laguna Beach to start up Shiny. Right from the off, Shiny pioneered the use of some impressive graphical techniques, which led to in-game sprites that looked more like the product of traditional cell animation than the blocky, pixellated norm. They were also responsible for creating everybody's favourite invertebrate related cartoon-style platform game, *Earthworm Jim*. Indeed, *EJ* proved sufficiently popular to warrant his own televised animated series, an accolade previously reserved for the likes of *Sonic The Hedgehog* and, er, *Pac-Man*.

Still, rather than sitting on their backsides gazing at a pile of banknotes and cackling insanely, Dave and the Shiny team have been putting in some hard graft to create new titles – which means 'bye-bye' to the two-dimensional platform games of yore, and 'hello sailor' to the firmly three-dimensional action-packed carnivals of carnage we know and love today. This has entailed the hiring of additional artists and programmers from around the world, and had effectively doubled Shiny's workforce in a matter of months. And the first fruit of their collective labour is *Murder Death Kill*.

FMV? NFI!

The first glimmer of the *MDK* demo left me particularly unimpressed. In fact I was downright uninterested. Stifling a yawn I figured it was just another boring FMV-backed shoot 'em up.

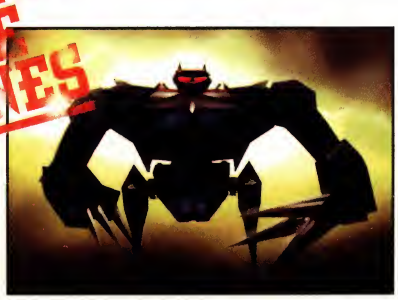
But then I discovered that it didn't have any FMV in it. The super-smooth three-dimensional action stuff I'd been watching was running in real-time, on a PC. Gumph. Good looking? You bet your sweet bippy it is. A smoothly-animated main character pegging it round a sprawling futuristic cityscape – with a visible range that extends miles further into the distance than what we're all accustomed to seeing. A viewpoint that swoops from here to there in a seamless

IN PRODUCTION

(Left) Here's a sketch showing Kurt's detachable face-gun helmet thing. Just try smuggling that through Customs.

(Below) ...and here it is again, in all its rendered glory. It's remarkable how closely the final graphics match the original sketches.

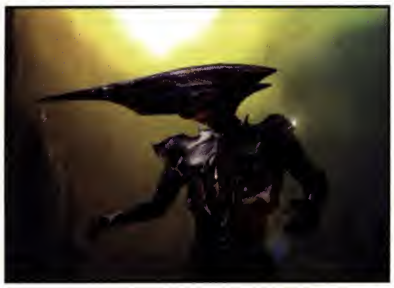
BEHIND THE SCENES



(Far left) Pah! A wireframe sentry? You don't scare me.

(Left) Erm, on second thoughts... (sound of poo-filling pants).

(Right) Here's Kurt in all his glory. I wouldn't want to be brown-nosed by him.



arc. Hulking great robot basts having their arms and legs blown off, and then reacting accordingly. Nerve-mutilating explosions. Endless rounds of gunfire. Running in a crystal-clear SVGA mode (640x480, fact fans), *MDK* has been optimised for use on Pentium-only machines with a minimum of 8MB. And if you think it looks good in these screenshots, you'll more or less cream your pants when you see the thing in action. Shiny really do seem to have excelled themselves here. This is *big stuff*.

Riders of the stream

Of course you all want to know what you'll be doing in the game. Well, in a nutshell, *MDK*'s storyline follows the human race which has discovered a bunch of gigantic 'energy streams' floating around in space. Needless to say the greedy so-and-sos are overcome with joy at the find, especially when it transpires that these streams appear to provide a limitless supply of energy – and a pollution-free one at that. Zip-a-dee-doo-dah.

But, as ever, there's a catch. These fabulous energy streams aren't just for freeloaders to launch their own worldwide fizzy drinks emporium; they're actually part of an interstellar transportation network for a race of weirdy pangalactic beings known as 'stream riders'. And the stream riders aren't very pleasant people at all, and they're certainly not the type to burst into tears during a matinee showing of *Bambi*. No indeedy, they're more likely to be found laughing out loud all the way through *Make Them Die Slowly*.

Understandably cheesed off by us lowly parasitic Earth-dwellers sucking off their power supply, they set about invading our planet with ginormous 'living cities' which stomp about all over the shop, squishing our crappy metropolises underfoot. Justifiably terrified,

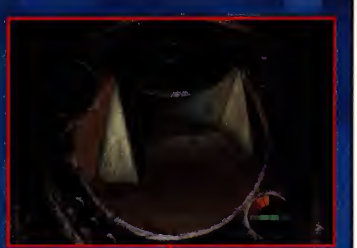
Brainiacs, ballistics and bastards

Not content with producing what looks like being one of the best-looking PC games ever, Shiny are also working on a sophisticated artificial intelligence routine which should not only make the in-game enemies react with more cunning than is the norm, but will also render them vulnerable to certain types of underhand tactics. The example given in Shiny's pre-release bumph is a means of taking out two enemies you've just spied from a great distance: rather than take out each of them in turn, the *sneaky* way of knocking them both out is to target one, blow his leg clean off, and then wait until his partner in crime dashes to his aid – at which point you can wipe them out with a well-placed missile blast. Now *that's* the kind of gunplay we appreciate here at *PC Zone*. Because we're bastards to a man.

From here to internally

The in-game action takes place from two main viewpoints. Whenever Kurt starts hoofing about, the 'camera' tags along behind him in a manner not too far removed from *Fade To Black* (except it looks a zillion times prettier). When a little more accuracy is called for however, the view zooms inside Kurt's helmet (c'mon now, the one on his head), which comes replete with all manner of radar screens and close-up views dotted around the sides. The range of vision should knock your socks off – the viewfinder will apparently be able to zoom in on an enemy who's practically on the other side of town, with such accuracy to allow you to knock off whichever individual body part you see fit.

Here's the 'running about' viewpoint, which gives you plenty of time to ogle Kurt's butt. That's ass-uming that you would want to!



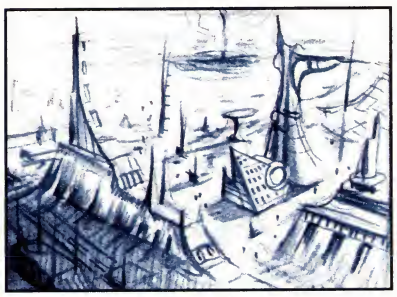
Inside the helmet. Oooh, d'ya reckon you can get The Cartoon Network on any of those screens?

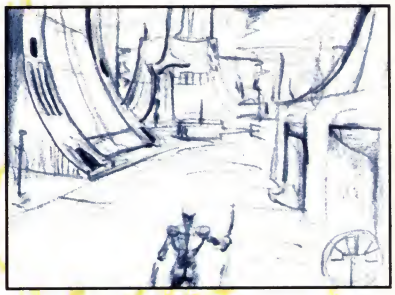
What's the name of the game?

With the exception of *MDK*, it has to be said that the majority of videogames come under resolutely *shitty* titles; even the good ones tend to be a little dull. *Command & Conquer* would've been much better if it'd been called *Scream And Slaughter*. Or even just *Slaughter*! (note the all-important exclamation mark here).

I would propose that the software houses take a leaf out of Hollywood's book. I'm not talking about the big studios – they tend to come up with crappy titles. I'm talking about the shifty no-good chancers who pump out the kind of sick horror nasties that are banned after ten minutes on general release. *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* territory, if you like (although that falls more into the comedy genre). Here's a list of just a few *exchellente* schlock-horror movie titles – the sort that really make you sit up and take notice. And I promise you, they're all *real films*...

Stuff Stephanie In The Incinerator
Carnage!
I Dismember Mama
Shriek Of The Mutilated
Three On A Meathook
Torso!
I Drink Your Blood & I Eat Your Skin (double bill, that one)
and my personal favourite...
Icepick In The Eye!





« the human race ducks into hiding.

But fear not, mere mortals, because help is at hand in the form of a young fellow named Kurt. Kurt is assistant to an absent-minded inventor, Professor Fluke Hawkins, and he's borrowed a whole shedload of gadgets and gizmos with the intention of ridding the Earth of the alien menace – and also tracking down his pooch Bones, who inexplicably went AWOL following the invasion. Glad tidings for us humans then – and good news for Professor Hawkins too, since it provides the ideal opportunity to test all the ridiculous weaponry he's been working on...

(Above) Gordon Bennett, look at the scenery.

(Above right) These sketches give some idea of the suitably futuristic setting.

Put your helmet on and go to war!

Possibly the most useful item in Kurt's inventory is the bizarre helmet he wears throughout the game. Looking rather like something the killer in *Seven* might have worn to Norman Bates' fancy dress party, it not only looks bloody scary (a whopping great detachable gun barrel sticking out of the front discourages any arguments), but it also doubles as a vision enhancer and targeting device. More on this great gizmo later.

The warped sense of humour that served Shiny so well in the *Earthworm Jim* games (as anyone who 'launched the cow' and then made it to the end will tell you), is very much in evidence here. Aside from the ability to blow limbs off your enemies, you also have access to some weapons whose names sum them up pretty effectively: weapons such as 'The World's Most Interesting Bomb', 'The Human Mortar', and last but not least, 'The World's Smallest Nuclear Explosion'. That last one is also equally handy for getting dried egg off plates or ruining your neighbour's azaleas.

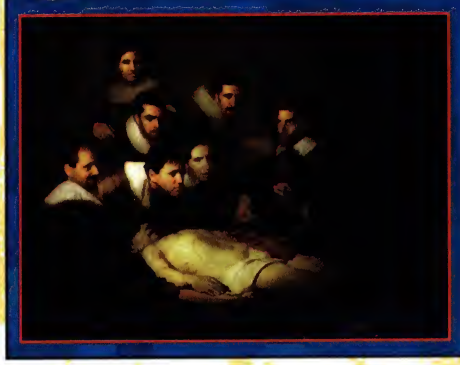
(Below left) A development sketch of 'Bones', Kurt's faithful pooch who also has a starring role in the game.

Rev up your spooge-sacs

It looks bloody smart, doesn't it? Well, sorry, but *Murder Death Kill* won't be available just yet. It's been pencilled in for release some time around Christmas... which gives those of you who *still* don't have Pentiums (and are instead relying on a scabby old clockwork 386 or something) plenty of time to save up for that upgrade you keep promising yourself (or at least to write a begging letter to Santa). And you can bet your cute little buns that we'll be bringing you more details and a 27-page review jam-packed with exclamation marks and expletives at the earliest possible second. So get those thumbs twiddling, because you're going to need them. Z

Meet the Shiny Team...

The Shiny Developers dealing with a software pirate in their own, liberal fashion.



1: Shawn Nelson
2: Loudvik Akopyan
3: Tim Williams
4: Dave Perry
5: Andy Astor
6: Nick Bruty
7: Bob Stevenson
8: A Dead Man

An interview with Dave Perry...

Our Charlie was so impressed with *MDK* that he e-mailed Dave Perry at Shiny with some questions...

CB: *MDK* looks bloody amazing. What kind of average frame rate are you anticipating for the finished product?
DP: Here at Shiny it currently runs at 30 frames per second. However, we've just hired a guy who will devote his life (or else his manhood) to getting a similar frame rate on all video cards. It really isn't the processor that slows down games, it's the different brands of video cards...
CB: I'm a little confused about some of the game elements. Exactly how do the 'free fall' sections work?
DP: You have keyboard or mouse control over Kurt. He's jumped from space and is entering Earth's atmosphere, and his objective is to arrive undetected and land on a moving city. This would be easy if it wasn't for the radar footprints that you have to avoid on the way down – when they 'see' you a whole bunch of missiles will also need to be avoided. This is really just your arrival system into a level.
CB: Are we going to see a range of *MDK*-related toys and cartoons (à la *Earthworm Jim*)? If so, will they come with live ammunition?
DP: Probably. However, these would make *Mortal Kombat* look like *The Magic Roundabout.*
CB: Does/will *MDK* support them thar high-falutin' 3D accelerator cards we keep hearing so much about, and if so, which ones?
DP: We're avoiding them like the plague; the game will run full-speed without them. The problem with most games is that when you plug in a 3D card it's *really* hard to see what's improved. We hope to spend some extra development time and add the bells and whistles that the cards really offer.
CB: Any plans for a new *Earthworm Jim*-related game for the PC?
DP: Playmates Interactive Entertainment are currently working on *The Can of Worms*, which is their own enhanced *Earthworm Jim 1* and *2* together for the PC. Activision have done an enhanced version of *Earthworm Jim – Special Edition* for Windows 95 only.

Over here the television show has been picked up by Warner Brothers for another year – that means more *Earthworm Jim* whether you like it or not. We are currently being approached by several publishers that want to make *Earthworm Jim* games and educational software.
CB: Imagine that... "Learn to Shoot" with *Earthworm Jim.* Going back to *MDK*, the combat suit thing that Kurt wears in the game reminds me of the nasty 'bondage suit' that the killer in *Seven* forced one of his victims to wear. Any comments?
DP: *Seven* is a killer movie *(grin).* Maybe we should have called *MDK* 'Eight'. The suit is really a weird material that does 'lift and support' but it's really the technology that makes it special.

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Broken Sword

REHIND THE SCENES

On the cover we've boldly stated that this is a game that has stolen LucasArts' thunder. John Davison takes an early look at one of the most impressive looking point-and-clickers to have surfaced in a long time.

IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE Revolution dished up *Beneath A Steel Sky* to a surprised public. Combining the artistic talents of Dave Gibbons (who produced the artwork for *Watchmen, Give Me Liberty* and countless other graphic novels including loads of Batman stuff) and the 'Virtual Theatre' adventure gameplay engine developed by Revolution head-honcho Charles Cecil, the game proved that it wasn't just the yanks who could produce a half-decent point-and-click adventure.

Broken Sword is the team's latest effort, and it has to be said that it's one of the most gorgeous-looking offerings we've seen for some time. This style of game has been out of fashion for a while, with the likes of *Gabriel Knight 2* and *Phantasmagoria* taking precedence, but *Broken Sword* is certain to re-establish its importance within the genre.

(Right) Although you can't see it here, most scenes have multi-layer parallax backdrops which give the graphics a real sense of depth.

(Below) Thankfully, investment in the game has been put into production values rather than into hiring big names to provide voices for the characters.

(Above) All of the artwork for the game was first produced by professional artists who submitted their work to the digital artists and painters, who then produced the gorgeous graphics that appear in the game.

Set in Paris, the game centres around a quest for the great secret guarded by the Knights Templar (quite a popular choice at the moment with a number of games recently, including *Time Gate* and *Azrael's Tear*). It seems that despite having disappeared hundreds of years ago, a sect of the Templars is alive and well and behaving in a seriously right-wing fashion in underground France. When the game opens you are drawn into a feud between the Templars and some ancient adversary, as a man with a briefcase (containing a manuscript pointing to the location of the Templar treasure) walks into a small café where you are nonchalantly sipping espresso. Unfortunately, he never walks out again as the whole place is blown up by a clown (?!?) who then nicks the briefcase and sods off. As everyone comes to, you are greeted by both the police and a particularly foxy journalist who you end up helping out. The ensuing quest takes you round Paris and eventually out to Syria in an attempt to track down the treasure.

Okay, so the story deals with lots of historical stuff, but one of the cool things about *Broken Sword* is that the subject matter is handled in an 'Indiana Jones' kind of way. The game contains an awful lot of history, but from what

Quality teamwork

With *Temptress* and *Beneath A Steel Sky*, pretty much everyone realised that Revolution could produce good quality games. To up the ante still further, they needed to support this level of excellence with graphic artists and musicians that could enhance the experience still further. The investment from Virgin has allowed them to do this, and here are a few key members of the team they've put together:

A senior layout artist from Don Bluth studios (who produced *All Dogs Go to Heaven* and *Secret Of Nim*).

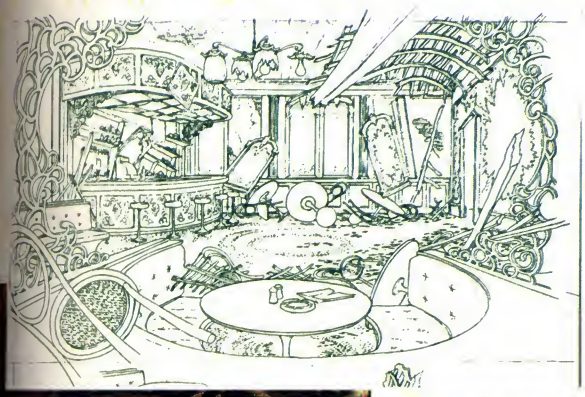
A digital painter who used to work for Amblimation (who produced *Balto* – that thing about the wolf).

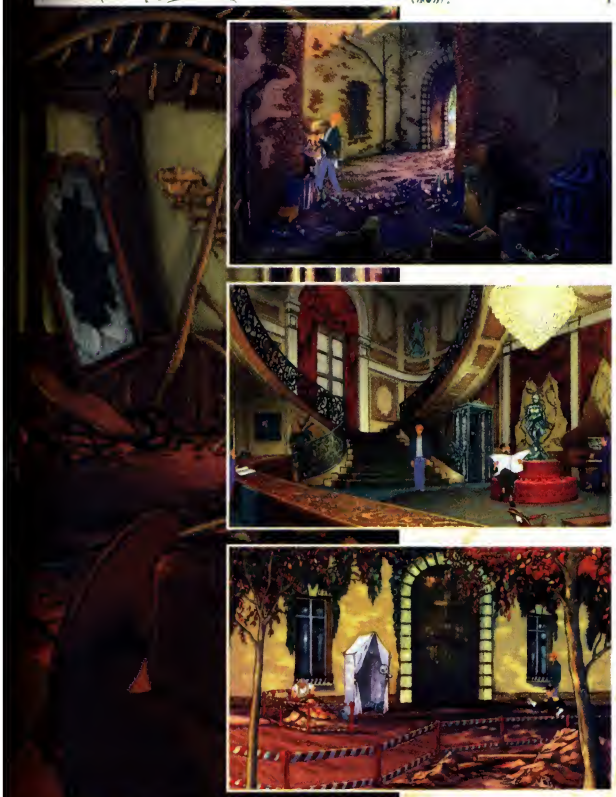
Animators who are all currently working on a top secret Disney project.

Music by Barrington Pheloung (who wrote the *Inspector Morse* theme among others).

Sound effects are being produced by Peter Greenaway Films (who did *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife And Her Lover*).

As for the story techniques, these were gleaned from Bob McKee who is a lecturer in film writing at UCLA. The script was then developed from this story by a senior BBC script writer.





The animation is particularly superb and has all been done by chaps from Disney.

we've seen so far, it never actually rams the stuff down your throat. You pick up loads of titbits, but in the way that you would do while watching, say, *Raiders Of the Lost Ark*. If you're anything like me, it'll certainly pique your interest in the Knights Templar for starters (see Some Interesting Stuff... box).

Ooh... the graphics

As well as having what will certainly pan out to be a rich storyline, the game also boasts something that will turn heads when it arrives for review... and that's superb graphics. They're all in hi-res SVGA, they've all been beautifully animated by chaps from Disney (see Quality Teamwork box) and to cap it all, they've been produced to give a tremendous sense of depth. Multi-layer parallax scrolling in SVGA anyone? Sounds rather smart, doesn't it?

As you can see from the screen shots, all of the backdrops have been beautifully produced (by professional layout artists) and the characters are particularly lovely in a stylised kind of a way. What really puts the icing on the cake, though, is the animation. In a lot of games of this style the characters tend to act as nothing more than an extension of your cursor, but here your character – and all the others for that matter – carry out their moves in a beautifully animated way that wouldn't look out of place in a proper cartoon.

Anyway, in a few months you'll be able to see for yourself when we get our hands on a finished copy of the game, and a fab playable demo. Watch this space.

Some interesting stuff about the Knights Templar

1. They started out in 1099 at the crusades and they were, it's pretty safe to say, rock hard.
2. They had a weird rule that if they weren't outnumbered by at least three to one they couldn't run away. Hard and completely bloody bonkers.
3. When they'd scared everybody they possibly could and eventually became bankers to the kings and queens of Europe, they lent so much money to the king of England that they demanded (and got) the crown jewels as collateral. Cool.
4. All this fuss about Friday the 13th comes from the Knights Templar. Back in 1307, it was on Friday 13th that Philip Le Bel stormed the Templar headquarters to try to track down their treasure. When he got there and tried to kill/burn/eat or whatever he did to everybody, he found that the treasure had gone and the Templars had buggered off. Bad luck mate.

Up The Revolution!

Revolution are a team that have been around for a while, but haven't really produced that many games. Way back in 1992 they developed a game called *Lure Of The Temptress*, which you may remember, and in 1994 they teamed up with the esteemed graphic novel artist Dave Gibbons to produce *Beneath A Steel Sky*. Both of these were particularly fantastic point-and-click adventures (and they're available on budget now... *Beneath A Steel Sky* was released on White Label only last month), which demonstrated that the team had the potential to take on the likes of LucasArts and Sierra.

In 1994 Virgin Interactive took a minority stake in Revolution with the specific aim of providing the team with the resources to produce games that realised this potential. *Broken Sword* is the first game to arise from this deal and is reputed to have had more than £1million worth of investment... something we've never witnessed in a title that doesn't have FMV or 'name' actors. And what's more, all of this investment has been in quality programmers, artists and animators. Z

Product details

Developer: Revolution
Publisher: Virgin Interactive
Telephone: 0171-368 2255
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: September

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Olympic Soccer

Despite rumours that Konami's International *Super Star Soccer Deluxe* is coming onto the PC, the master of platforms still lacks a football fan's footie game. Will US Gold manage to produce the impossible? Jeremy Wells is our man with the questions.

US GOLD KNOW ABOUT A THING OR two about footie games, having several already tucked under their belt. Mind you, although their previous releases weren't bad, you wouldn't really describe them as milestones in football gaming history.

That said, *Olympic Soccer* is the first game to emerge from the 'hush-hush-guess-what-we're-working-on?' development team known as Silicon Dreams. Up until now SD have been a bit of an unknown quantity, so who knows what they're capable of?

Well, for starters they've made the rather bold assertion that they've already managed to succeed where Gremlin and EA Sports *et al* have so far failed. Or as Programmer Andy Hersee modestly puts it: "Two years ago the impossible mission was to create a true 3D game. Now the impossible has been achieved. *Olympic Soccer* is here. Miracles do happen." So, you're no doubt asking, just what's so special about *Olympic Soccer*?

Well, on the face of it, not a lot really. Silicon Dreams haven't used any kind of motion capture techniques; the graphics, while impressively smooth (at around 40FPS at 640x480 on a modest Pentium), aren't in the same league as *Actua*, and the control system is a simple but seen-it-all-before three-button, short pass, long pass, shoot affair – and there's no pace button, player select option or header control in sight. There isn't even a choice of playing on a network, just the usual two-player, fight over the joystick scenario. In other words, it would appear that SD have gone out of their way to keep the game simple.

So why the deliberate swing away from the almost mandatory fancy graphics and gizmos? Has the backlash started already? Well, according to the guys (and girl) at Silicon Dreams, it's really quite clear cut: "A soccer game lives or dies on its gameplay. You can have the best graphics and sound around, but if the game plays badly then forget it."

That said, the chaps at SD have put a fair amount of time and effort into making the presentation not just shine, but glisten like a recently buffed spoon. While creating a fast and versatile engine has eaten up a fair proportion of their time, they've also been busy producing a gratuitous 'footballie' rendered intro sequence, writing a "stonking" techno soundtrack and compiling around 1700 phrases for commentator Alan Green to recite in his inimitable fashion.

Thankfully, little things like tactics, formations, man-marking and the degree to which the ball sticks to the player's foot haven't been neglected; on the contrary, they've been given such a thorough roasting that the player should be able to build and develop quite a complex array of tactics with which to scuttle and confound their opponents, which, if all goes to plan, should be similar to those found in the afore-mentioned *ISSD* from Konami. What's more, the player will be able to change things at any time during the game and even instruct his side to 'push-up' – or in other words to stop trying so hard because it's only a friendly match.

If SD can deliver exactly what they've promised we could have something of a corker on our hands come the summer. Let's hope they do pull it off – which is also a rather common sentiment among football fans at the moment. **Z**

There will be six cameras and three different angles of view – that means 18 different options.

Like every other football game, *Olympic Soccer* will have a scanner – but this one can be angled to follow the flow of play.

There will be loads of tactical options – eight different formations, selectable player zones, man-marking options. You'll have complete control (allegedly).

The game will use the "glue shoe", but if you make a tight 180 degree turn, you may lose it.

"Although looking at other games is subjective, we believe that *Actua Soccer* has too many ideas that are unrealistic... it is not playable."
Silicon Dreams

Product details

Developer: Silicon Dreams
Publisher: US Gold
Telephone: 0121-625 3388
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: June/July

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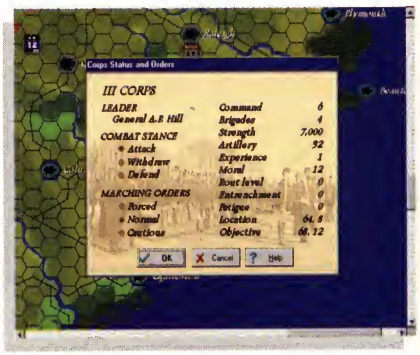

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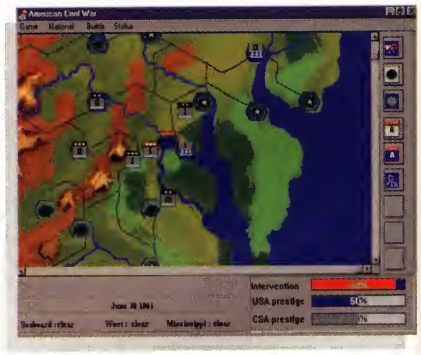

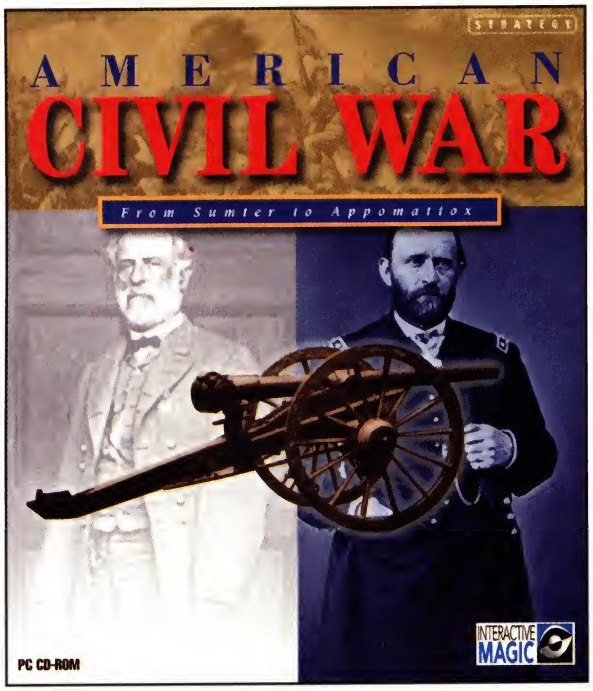

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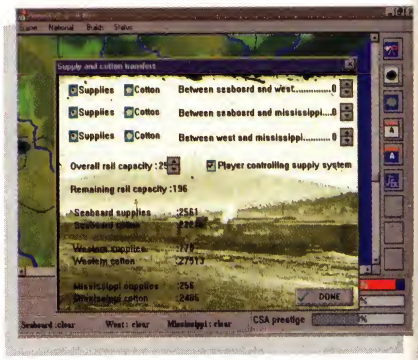

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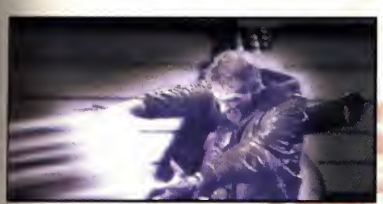
Hardline

(Below) The actual game is a cross between *Virtua Cop* (only with video instead of polygons) and any first-person point-and-click adventure you care to name.

Cryo's new action adventure may look and play like the best thing ever, but it has a fatal flaw in the macho department – unlike Paul Presley of course.

CONAN! INDIANA JONES! BOND, James Bond! Hardcastle *and* McCormick! Indisputable heroes one and all. And why? Not because of their deeds, their adventures, their derring-do, but because of their names. What could be more macho than strolling into a room accompanied by a theme tune which declares, "Who's the private dick that's a sex machine to all the chicks? Shaft! Damn right," and basking in the knowledge that you are indeed the aforementioned John Shaft – licensed sex machine and hero? So if being a hero is all about having a cool name, why did Cryo christen the freelance pilot and psychic warrior hero of their new all-action adventure game Ted? I mean to say – Ted? He's a pilot, so why not Blades McMurphy or something? Instead it sounds like he should be playing darts for a living rather than blowing up bad guy-infested warehouses. I dunno...



(Above) Ah, thanks. That'll do nicely.

(Left) There is a strong psychic aspect to *Hardline*. This is demonstrated by the hero Ted as he turns blue and screams a lot. Give me a gun any day.

(Below) Cryo's graphic rendering table also doubles as a NASA control room during quiet patches.

(Below right) *Hardline*'s designers Nic Mathieu and Gregoire Glachant; Greg is the one that looks like he needs a nap. Bless him.

Anyway, back to Ted

But that's exactly your plan of action in *Hardline*. Think of a hybrid mutated from *Virtua Cop* and *Gabriel Knight 2*, only with full video throughout, and you'll get an idea of what it's all about. The near future has seen the rise of a strange and violent cult which worships some evil guy called The Deck. Your mission Ted, should you decide to accept it (see, it just doesn't sound right), is to infiltrate the gang, uncover The Deck's true identity and scupper his nefarious schemes.

Due to the entirely filmed nature of *Hardline*, it all looks and feels like a close relative of *Terminator 2*, with moody lighting, shiny sets (most of which were real), lots of impressive stunts and very lifelike special effects (helicopters crashing through office windows, things exploding all over the place etc) and some pretty good acting talent too. Perhaps this is because the lead designers both hail from Hollywood and are well versed in just about every trick in the professional filmmaker's library. At times the game looks more professional than some prime-time TV fodder (*Bugs* immediately springs to mind), except it's a darn sight more entertaining.

The designers have pretty much succeeded in seamlessly tying all these filmic attributes into the game elements, and because everything is filmed, there are no breaks in the reality, no jumps from FMV to polygons. *Hardline* sets out to tell a story, create an atmosphere and then steadfastly blocks out any distractions.

BEHIND THE SCENES

IN PRODUCTION

Virgin are keen to stress however that *Hardline* is not a proper 'interactive movie' thingy. Perhaps as a response to the bad press received by such ventures of late, they are instead marketing it as a 'fun' product. Yes, it has film bits, yes it has actors, sets, props and everything else you'd see on a *Film '96* Set Report, but this is strictly an action blaster with adventure elements thrown in.

Personally I'd say their fears are unjustified. At this stage *Hardline* looks closer to being the true definition of an interactive movie than anything I've seen to date. Perhaps they should throw caution to the wind and go with it? We'll have the full gen on whether the game lives up to its promising start in the very near future. **Z**

Product details

Developer: Cryo
Publisher: Virgin
Telephone: 0171-368 2255
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: June

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MAX: Mech Commander

IN PRODUCTION

(Top right) "This week on *Cars of the Stars*, Little and Large."

(Below right) Power plant in three-testicled-sex-organ lookalike shock.

(Below) Development sketches showing things you wouldn't want to sit on accidentally.

When we heard the news that Interplay were releasing a new hi-tech wargame, we asked Charlie Brooker to have a gander at it and then write down his thoughts, in crayon, on a lump of wood...

WAR. WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR? Absolutely nothing, you say? Horseshit! It just gets bad press, that's all. In fact, war is absolutely *brilliant*. Livens things up no end. Peaceful civilisation is *soooo* boring. There's nothing to look forward to. There's nothing to be frightened of. And there's no reason to get down on your knees and thank your lucky stars that you're *alive*. All there is to occupy your mind is the normal, work-a-day world. The same old routine. Get up, go to work, come home, argue with your loved one, fall asleep, wake up, etc etc. How tedious. How stifling.

Ah, but a quick dose of WAR, and boom! Loads of great telly. Loads of great mindless flag-waving in the papers. And *loads* of great photographs of people with their heads blown off and their limbs all torn to strips.

Suddenly, you discover your true purpose in life. Perhaps you struggled for years under the delusion that you were meant to be a great artist, a novelist, a philosopher, or maybe just the world's greatest lilo salesman – but now you know the *truth*. You were born unto this good earth, raised from child to man, had your mind stuffed chock-full of knowledge and experience and the whole shebang, for one reason and one reason only – to die on behalf of the Government. Of course! Life becomes an exhilarating game of chance: either you get called up and risk having your face shot off in the middle of a field somewhere, or you stay at home and take the gamble of having nuclear bombs dropped in your back garden.

And if by some miraculous twist of fate you actually *survive* the entire debacle, you'll have plenty of interesting neuroses to keep you entertained until the day you die (probably in the next war, slowly and painfully, on behalf of whichever Government got in after the last one which tried to kill you).

Yep, war is completely great. Which is why it's such a popular theme for videogames.

Shut up and tell me about the game

Since you got so bored during that intro that you've already gazed at each of the screenshots in turn and come to a few conclusions, allow me to explain a little more about the game we're discussing here. Yes, it does look a little like everybody's favourite

BEHIND THE SCENES

war 'em up, *Command & Conquer*. But it's quite different really. Think of it as *C&C* with a PhD. Set in the future. With up to four players in it.

Actually, it's probably best if you forget about *Command & Conquer* for a minute and think about *Outpost* instead. Because *MAX: Mech Commander* lies somewhere between the two. 'Arcadey' graphics, fab explosions, and lightning fast decision-making mingle with turn-based gameplay (don't panic), resource management, and frown-inducing bouts of strategic concentration. You get the picture.

It's absolutely overflowing with neat tools of destruction. Imagine an *Argos* catalogue for international arms dealers (from the year 2345) and you're not far off. Futuristic tanks, subs, fighter jets – they're all here. Each of them have a full range of stats for you to inspect – speed, armour, power, etc – although it's also possible to splash out a little more money and customise them a bit. Fancy turbo-charging those slovenly tanks a little? Just hand over the money and there you go. (There are no fancy paintwork options, mind.)

The fighting takes place upon a randomly generated map, with varied environments chucked in for good measure – sometimes you shall fight them on the beaches, and sometimes in the middle of a snowdrift. And as I mentioned before, it's also a multi-player game, so you can choose to fight against any combination of one to four players, be they human opponents, or devious computer-generated bastards.

To further the tension, individual players can choose to represent any one of eight different 'clans', each of which have their own specific advantages and disadvantages, ranging from 'being a bit on the nimble side' to 'having more cash at the start of the game, nyahh nyahh nyahh'.

Clash of the Titans

Of course, when the opposing sides aren't knocking the bejesus out of each other, they'll be scrabbling around with their hands in the dirt, on the lookout for precious resources. But keeping the industrial side of things ticking over is equally important to success in the game, since you'll need to put in the initial groundwork before you can lay your hands on the beefiest firepower and the highest of hi-tech equipment (and there's *a lot* to discover). There's plenty to think about during each turn. Indeed, although the game has yet to be completed, it looks fairly certain that it will soon be causing quite a few late-night warmongering sessions among the PC community. Once it's all finished off and tucked up nicely in its box, we'll take a peek under its nightshirt and tell you just how much fun it's going to be. Which is a spurious way of saying 'we'll be reviewing it in a future issue'. **Z**

Product details

Developer: In-House
Publisher: Interplay
Telephone: 01628 423666
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: Autumn

The 'Arrrgh'os catalogue

Here's a quick peekette at a few of the many many thingamajigs and hoojamaflips you'll be getting to grips with in the game. Just fill out the catalogue number on your order form, queue up at the counter, and wonder how on earth you're going to get it on the bus home...

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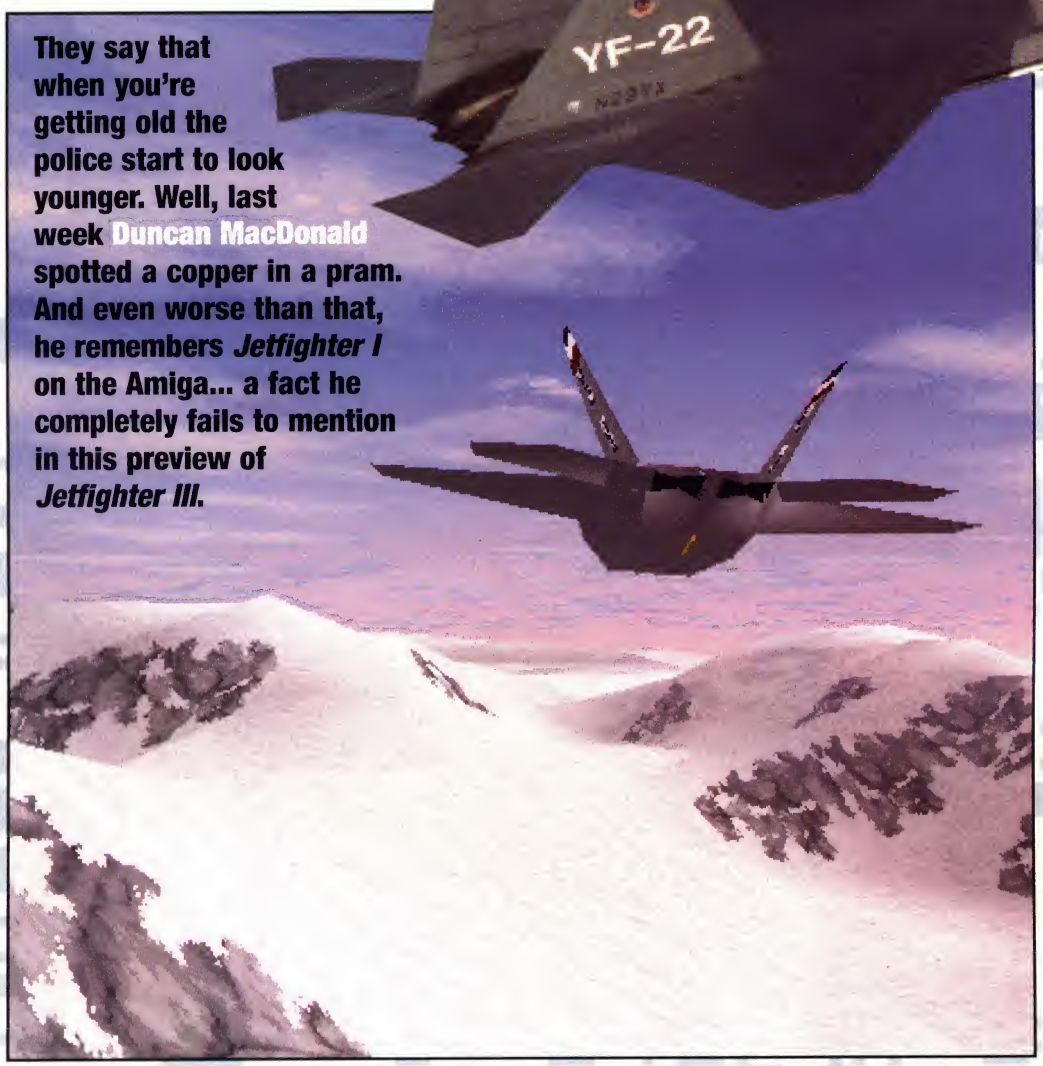
(That's enough of this bollocks – Ed.)

Jetfighter



They say that when you're getting old the police start to look younger. Well, last week Duncan MacDonald spotted a copper in a pram. And even worse than that, he remembers *Jetfighter I* on the Amiga... a fact he completely fails to mention in this preview of *Jetfighter III*.

RIGHT, HANDS UP IF YOU REMEMBER *Jetfighter II*. Yes? No? Well I do, for a couple of reasons. The first is that I'd just bought a brand new 486DX/33 (which unfortunately I've still got), and *Jetfighter II* ran super smoothly and super quickly even at the highest detail setting. The second reason I remember it so clearly is that it came in a ridiculous box. It was your normal rectangular shape for the most part, but it had a stupid sticky-out triangley bit on the top which made it impossible to stack. It eventually became the guilty party (as it descended further down the pile) in several 'Oh no, my ludicrously tall tower of computer games boxes has toppled over again' scenarios.

Indeed, the *Jetfighter II* packaging was responsible for (1) a disgustingly full ashtray plunging onto my sofa, (2) a very large teacup emptying its half-finished contents into the 'explodey bit' of my TV, and (3) a domino-effect disaster in which every single thing in my flat fell over (including the washing machine).

(Above) As well as looking totally fab, *Jetfighter III* will feature a 'real' playing area based on accurate maps and charts. Coo!

So I'm sure you'll understand that the first question I wanted answered was whether or not the *Jetfighter III* box would have... er, protrusions.

"What exactly do you mean?" asked the US Gold bloke.

"Sticky-out triangley bits," I replied. "Or sticky-out any shape bits for that matter. It's very important."

He said he didn't know as the packaging hadn't been designed yet, but did I want to know anything about the actual game? I said that I did. As, no doubt, do you. Read on...

By Jimminy – it's so uncannily realistic!

Jetfighter III's massively gigantic playing area is, apparently, uncannily realistic. As with say, *Flight Sim 5*, the whole game is mapped out from, er, maps. But we're not just talking about the true to life shape of the land below as viewed from 20,000 feet, we're also talking about the true to life shape of the hill you're about to crash into when flying upside down at an altitude of 12 feet. Every single square metre of the game's terrain, the US Gold bloke assures me, is accurate in an uppy and downy direction thanks to data gleaned from zillions upon zillions of Ordnance Survey charts. Aha! I spot a chance to be 'clever'.

"Did you know that Ordnance Surveys were originally commissioned by the military?" I mention as casually as I can. "It was so they'd know the best places to put their cannons."

"Yes, I know," said the US Gold bloke. "Everyone knows. It's why they're called 'Ordnance' Surveys. So how come you thought that was going to be some sort of a revelation? Didn't you do geography at school?"

I explain that geography lessons at my school consisted of 30 boys flicking rolled-up saliva-soaked pieces of paper into the teacher's beard. "We learned nothing from Mr Pottage in five whole years," I tell him, "but we all became excellent shots!" He's not impressed.

Placement perfection

But as well as geographical accuracy regarding the landscapes, *Jetfighter III* stays on the realism button for the structures as well, I'm told.

"If it's there in real life," says the US Gold bloke, "it's there in the game."

"What, in exactly the same spot?" I wonder aloud.

"In *exactly* the same spot!" he exclaims.

"So, erm, every single building and every single object is in the same place in *Jetfighter III* as it is in the real world?"

"Yes. How many times do you need to hear it? Like I said, if it's there in real life, it's there in the game."

"I left an empty can of Tango on the very top of a small mountain in Crete once," I say. "Will *that* be there?"

"Tell me, does your discarded can of Tango appear on any maps you've seen recently?" he counters, curtly.

I tell him that it probably doesn't. He then informs me that it therefore, probably, won't be appearing in the game. (I consider this to be a minus point, but realise I'm maybe just being picky. I pursue the subject no further.)

Warp Factor Zero

Another brilliant thing about *Jetfighter III* (I'm told), is that unlike most flight sims there are loads of little details: people, cars, goat herds, tractors, sheds and what have you – all those things that are so important when you're just faffing around. A pertinent thought suddenly occurs...

"So you *can* just faff around, I presume? Without getting shot at?"

"Of course," says the US Gold bloke, glowing with pride. "There's a 'Free Flight' option which is great because as well as the phenomenal number of objects to look at – and the fact that everything is fully light-sourced – there's also an extremely good texture-mapping system. Rolling pastures, snow-capped peaks, sandy shores, sheer 500 foot cliff faces, and anything else you'd care to mention, all look superb. It's just like being there. And guess what else."

"What?"

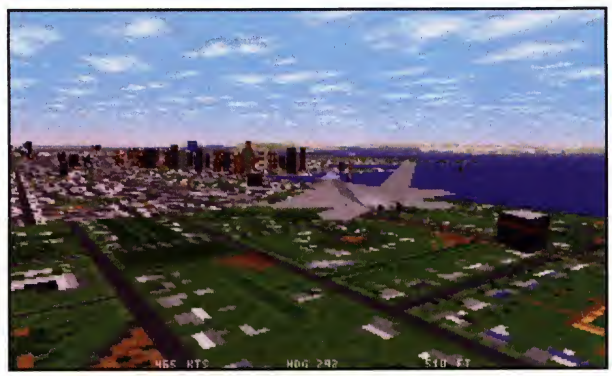
"There's no warping. Get as close as you like! Take my word for it. And the frame rate's really great. Oh, and in bad weather the aircraft carrier that serves as your home base pitches and rolls like you wouldn't believe – it's enough to make you seasick, really."

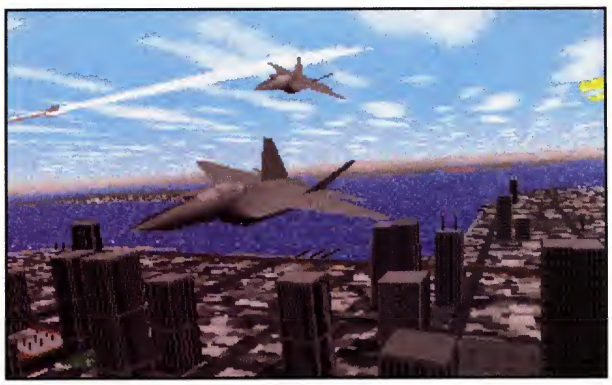
"Well done!"

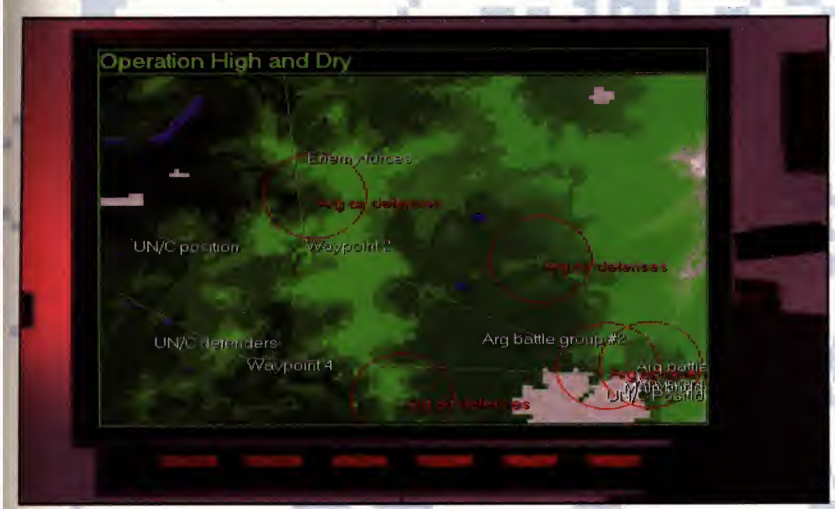
"I know. But you didn't ask if it made landing trickier."

"Does it make landing trickier?"

"Yup! Sure does!"







(Above) The level of detail down below is quite stunning, and it doesn't warp either. It's like flying over a livin', breathin' world.

(Left) Velocity are currently working on the plot, which they hope will be just as complex as and compelling as the one in *Top Gun*, only better.

"YAAAARGH!"

I'm sorry, I know I should have more self control, but when he said those two words I just couldn't help it... I screamed. The US Gold bloke seemed genuinely bemused. I told him I'd be alright if he didn't repeat what he'd just said. He paused, scratched his head for a few seconds, then added, in all innocence, that the only thing he'd said was how *Jetfighter III*, when you weren't in the air, was an interactive movie.

I cried out in pain for a second time.

"What's on earth's wrong?" Again he seemed genuinely bemused.

I mouthed the offending words, slowly. Twice. He caught on.

"Interactive movie???"

"Yaaaaaaargh!"

"But it's really good. Three decks of the carrier are fully explorable. You can go all over the place. You meet people, look at things, read things, get involved in the story. You know? It's really good. Honest. The acting's superb, and the script's great too. It's non-linear. If you go out on a mission and stuff it up, it can change the plotline. There are multiple endings and everything. It's along the lines of, er... let's see... did you like *Wing Commander IV*?"

"Yaaaaaaargh!"

"Oh. So, um, name me an interactive movie..."

"Yaaaaaargh!"

"...That you actually liked."

"*Top Gun* was along the right lines."

"Well, hey, in that case you might find that *Jetfighter III* is even better. Be open. Be positive. Are you always like this? For god's sake will you stop being such a bloody pain in the arse!"

I reluctantly concurred. After all, it sounds good in theory, doesn't it? And the screenshots bear it some witness. But for me – at the end of the day – it all comes down to whether or not the packaging has a triangley bit sticking out of the top. Let's wait and see, eh? Z

Product details

Developer: Velocity

Publisher: US Gold

Telephone: 0121-625 3388

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: Late 1996

live the spirit

A football game lives or dies on the strength of its gameplay. You can have the best graphics and sound in the world but if the game doesn't play football then forget it! Olympic Soccer however, has everything.

- *Compete against 32 teams from around the globe*
- *Full Olympic Games tournament and Arcade mode*
- *Unique commentary by radio commentator Alan Green*
- *1 to 4 player simultaneous breathtaking action*
- *Super smooth motion-captured animation*
- *Technically advanced Real-Time 3D Engine*
- *18 playable TV-style camera views with action replays viewed from any angle*
- *3D player and object polygon modelling offering over 20 moves*

Olympic Soccer excels in the playability stakes, it combines speed & skill control with breathtaking end-to-end action.

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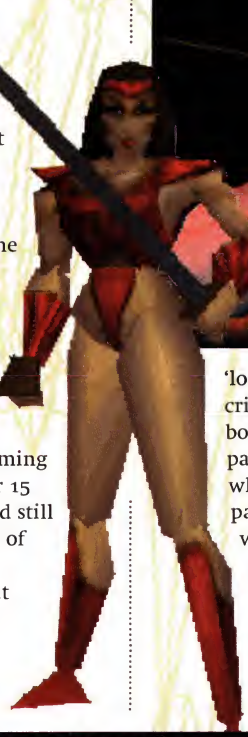
Deathtrap Dungeon

IN PRODUCTION

Hacking and slaying your way through dungeons fraught with danger and beasts from the devil's own bottom, now that's what Pete Hawley calls a Fighting Fantasy. Ian Livingstone's classic FF book gets the 3D treatment from his own game company, EIDOS.

THOSE WERE THE DAYS. Racing to the nearest Smiths to buy the new Fighting Fantasy book from Ian Livingstone. Whether you were battling the *Warlock of Firetop Mountain* or getting hideously lost in the *Forest of Doom*, these books provided gameplaying fantasy fans with a new challenge. Ahhh... fond memories indeed. Ian Livingstone created a new gaming experience; with sales of over 15 million, the FF series was, and still is, one of the best-selling sets of game books in history.

The concept was simple but strangely addictive. Your role was that of a lone adventurer battling his way through hundreds of 'locations' represented by descriptive paragraphs within the books' pages. At the end of each paragraph was a decision point, which then lead you to a new page and location depending on what choice you made. Combat was resolved by running away to another 'page location' or by using a combat system involving a lot of luck and a dab hand with a pair of dice.



As you can see, the graphics are shaping up beautifully – we particularly like the look of the fearsome female on the right...

BEHIND THE SCENES

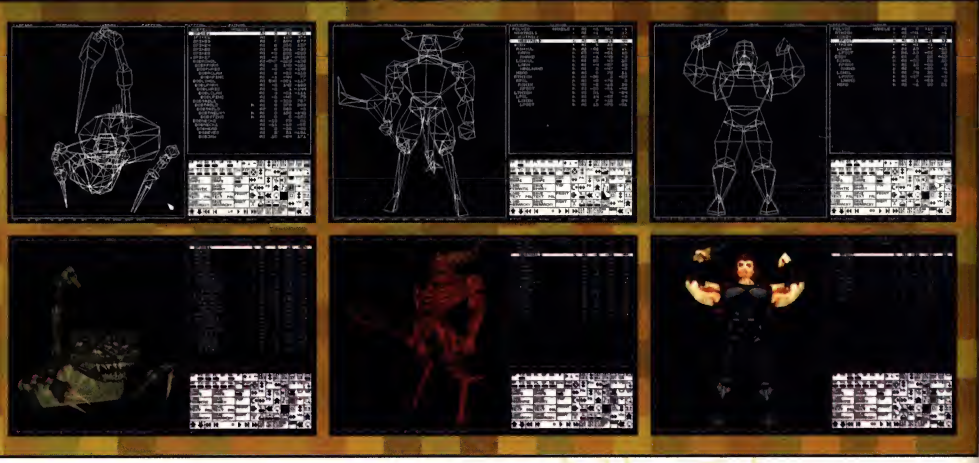
Transformation time

So that's the story and concept behind the books, what about the game? Well, this is the first in a new series of games based on the FF books and it comes from a strong team of fantasy heavyweights. It's obvious that Ian Livingstone still has a keen interest in the development of his concept, having recruited two key members from Games Workshop. Richard Halliwell, the author of classic tabletops *Warhammer* and *Space Hulk*, has been hard at work

Monsters, monsters everywhere

Here are just some of the weird and wonderful beasties and characters we can expect to see in the final game. There will be 55 of them in all, but this selection should be enough to whet the old appetite. Each character is constructed as a wireframe model and animated before the textures are added to bring them to 'life'. Naturally there'll be the usual sprinkling of common beasties such as skeletons, orcs and human opponents in the earlier less complex levels, and each will have their own animation and movement to lend them character and personality.

As the game becomes increasingly complex through the later levels we can expect to be running into revolting giant spiders, zombies, mummies, and the less common and more dangerous red dragons.



implementing devious dungeon designs and puzzles, ably assisted by ex-*White Dwarf* editor Jamie Thompson. All in all, not a bad start...

Dragons & Dungeons

There will be 16 levels in the finished game, and during my visit to the development team I saw them being sketched out on paper and transferred into the 3D editor. This is where all the traps and creatures are given their own place and introduced into the intricate level layouts, with the result that everything can be put into perspective. But there's more than monsters and traps to be added to the game...

Deathtrap Dungeon is the latest 3D adventure game to include dynamic lighting. Dark damp corridors will be illuminated by torches, and if you cast a spell you'll see the floors and ceilings light up, while swinging chandeliers add to the atmosphere by throwing long shadows which warn you of enemy presence. This technology is being used increasingly in many new titles, and from what I saw I'd say that *Deathtrap Dungeon's* effects are right up there with the *Dungeon Keepers* and *Into The Shadows* of this world.

But flash lighting effects aside, *Deathtrap Dungeon* has been designed from a solid gameplay point of view. Okay, there are a lot of puzzles to solve and traps to avoid but as far as combat is concerned the team don't want to see the player getting bogged down in sluggish melee rounds. The combat is fast and furious – buckets of blood and plenty of sword-swinging and limb removal should be the order of the day. There'll be 55 monsters and beasties for you to get your sword stuck in to – take a peek at the monster panel to get a taste of what's in store.

But let's not forget one of the main reasons for the incredibly fast and violent combat – yep, you guessed it, the team are currently working on a network option. I for one just can't wait for a stab at multi-player hacking and slaying over an IPX network and/or modem. This is another piece of good news for fantasy fans, especially with the imminent arrival of Wireplay from BT – with any luck *Deathtrap Dungeon* will be another title to become available on-line. I'm keeping my fingers crossed until September... Z

Product details

Developer: EIDOS

Publisher: EIDOS

Telephone: 0171-780 2222

Format: CD-ROM

Release date: September

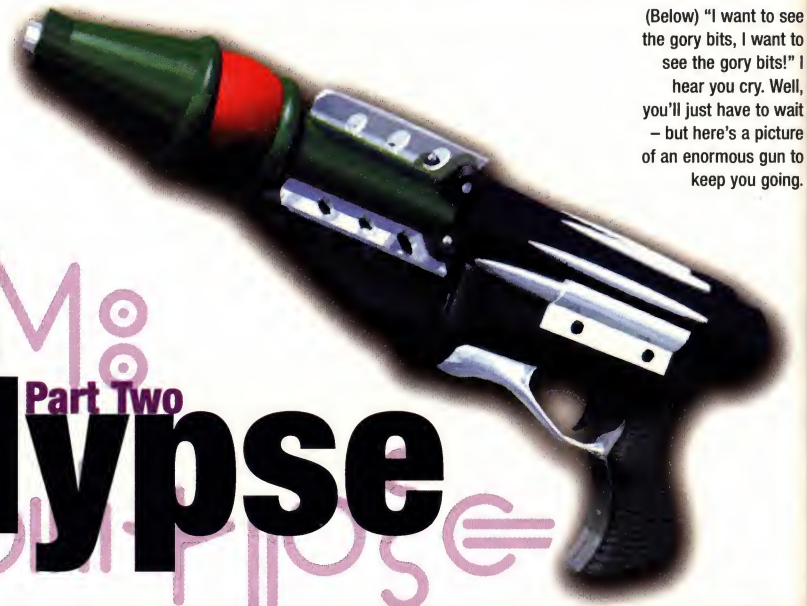
The camera never lies!

All the gameplay in *Deathtrap Dungeon* will be viewed from a third-person perspective – a sort of out-of-body experience, if you like. As our hero walks through the complex levels looking for traps or a spot of trouble, you shouldn't miss out on any of the action thanks to the painstaking programming of a new intuitive game camera which changes the viewpoint according to his situation and position.

During casual wanderings your view is a close one, hovering above and behind the hero; the 'intelligent camera' moves and angles itself constantly so you never lose sight of the gameplay or any potential traps and ambushes that may lie ahead.

This is a crucial part of the game's development – faced with an incorrect viewpoint you'd soon lose track of what's going on and end up frustrated. The development team have realised this and a lot of their time has been spent developing the AI of the camera's movements. For example, this should prevent traps being triggered just because you're hampered by a lack of time or a poor field of vision to avoid them.

The view pans out in larger rooms where possible combat situations could arise. This gives you, the player, a better picture of the entire surroundings. Going around corners and down slopes isn't a problem either – every move is calculated and compensated for by the camera positioning.



(Below) "I want to see the gory bits, I want to see the gory bits!" I hear you cry. Well, you'll just have to wait – but here's a picture of an enormous gun to keep you going.

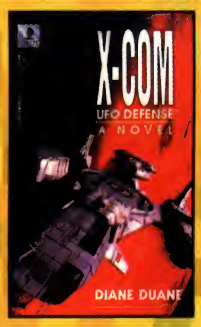
X-COM: DIARY Apocalypse

Part Two

Chris Anderson went back to MicroProse to write the second part of his *X-COM* diary. Unfortunately for him, they all knew he was coming, and buggered off somewhere. This explains why he has had to conduct all his interviews over the phone.

(Right) It's a farm, innit? Actually, it *is*.

X-COM mania



Adrian Turner, Product Marketing Manager for *X-COM*, is convinced that the game is going to be "absolutely sodding massive". To back up this claim he's already started organising all sorts of *X-COM* merchandise and point of sale products for retail. As well as the usual sort of stuff (you know, T-shirts, pens, mugs etc) there may well be a full-colour 'UFOpaedia' that lists all of the characters, buildings and vehicles in the game, and explains how they fit into the great scheme of things. *X-COM* fans in the UK may be interested to know that there's already a novel based on the *X-COM* world available now. *UFO Defense*, written by Diane Duane and published by Prima, is based on the events and characters in the original game and was released in the UK in March. Prima say it's their biggest-selling novel based on a computer game tie-in. As it happens, Adrian has just popped a copy of this in the post for my perusal (cheers mate). I'll give you the full gen on it next month. *(Chris has now surpassed the boundaries of* X-COM *sadness and moved onto another plain entirely. We daren't speculate as to the meaning of all this – Ed.)*

Product details

Developer: MicroProse
Publisher: MicroProse
Telephone: 01454 893893
Format: CD-ROM

ONE MONTH FURTHER DOWN THE road, *X-COM: Apocalypse* is still pretty much in its early stages. While everyone is beavering away day and night in an attempt to get the game into some sort of playable form, I thought I'd annoy them all by phoning up to ask them 'interesting' questions. While I was at it I also asked them a few questions about the game too.

The general consensus of opinion among the lads and lasses at MicroProse is that everything is going more or less to schedule. This isn't exactly surprising, seeing as the poor sods are all working 80 hours a week just to make sure *Apocalypse* arrives on time.

Ground-breaking game shock

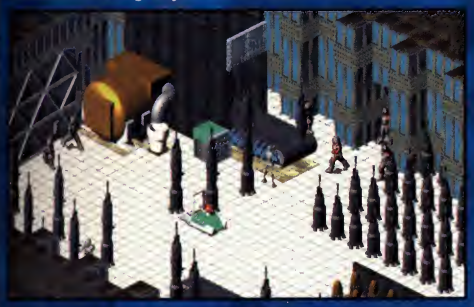
I had a chat with Julian Gollop, Head Designer on *X-COM: Apocalypse*, and co-owner of Mythos (the team developing the game). Julian, in common with everyone else working on the project, is incredibly enthusiastic about the developments so far: "*X-COM: Apocalypse*, when we finally finish it, will set new standards for strategy gaming. It has genuinely ground-breaking gameplay elements, and a highly sophisticated AI system which will put many of its contemporaries to shame."

This is just the sort of thing I'm used to hearing from programmers and developers when they're explaining how wonderful their new games are. In this case though, having had a chance to see how things are shaping up for myself, I unreservedly share Julian's excitement about a product that really does look like it will fulfil its early potential.

Bearing in mind the phenomenal

Tactical operation

The tactical part of the game is slowly but surely coming together. These early screenshots will give you some idea of what to expect from the finished thing.



An arms factory. Check out the heavy laser weapons. Just the job for arming your X-COM vehicles before taking on alien scum.

X-COM agents move into a factory to investigate a disturbance. The factory workers sensibly decide to leg it.

(Above) Buildings of the future will have strange sketchy bits surrounding them.

success of the first two games, I asked Julian to comment on what he perceives to be the major improvements *Apocalypse* will bring to the series. He thought about it for a bit, then told me: "It's difficult to know where to start really. Basically, we've completely rewritten the whole game. All the characters (both human and alien) are far more intelligent. The combat sections can now be played in real-time, or die-hard *UFO* fans can revert to the turn-based combat used in the first games if they so desire. The tactical maps are bigger, more complex, and generally much more interesting. Having said all that, we've been careful not to alienate fans of the original game. I like to think that we've managed to enhance the gameplay that made the first two games so addictive, as opposed to changing it beyond recognition."

Well, so far it's all sounding excellent – it's certainly making me incredibly keen to see more. I'll be talking to Julian and Nick next month about *X-COM: Apocalypse's* complex AI system, as well as taking a close look at some of the main characters in the game. I've been told there may even be (gasp) something playable to look at. Can't wait! See you all next month... Z

(Left) It's with guns such as these that you'll smash the nasty aliens into tiny pieces.

From tiny acorns

(Above) The MicroProse art team are understandably well chuffed with *X-COM*.

Even at this early stage the in-game graphics are looking rather fabulous. This is all down to the splendid efforts of the MicroProse art team. Guy Jeffries (Art Co-ordinator) and his colleagues have gone to great lengths to ensure that all the buildings, sprites, objects and vehicles in the game are as detailed and visually exciting as possible. For example, the flying police car (figure 1) started life as a preliminary sketch by one of the team's artists. This sketch was then handed to a graphic designer who, using an art package such as Alias or Soft Image, came up with his own interpretation of the original design (figure 2). The results, as you can see, are pretty bloody spectacular. All the vehicles and buildings in the game get the same treatment, resulting in a very polished and good-looking game environment indeed.

Figure 1

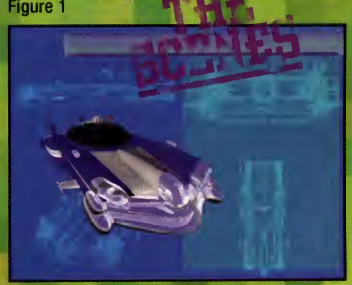


Figure 2

Production values

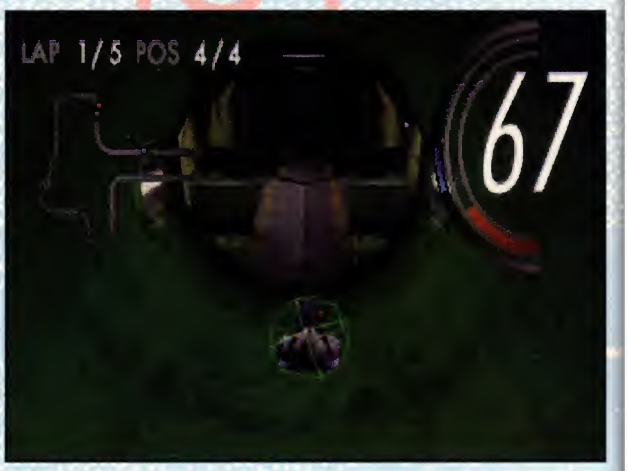
Steve Goss, Producer on *Apocalypse*, is the man responsible for making sure everything happens when it's supposed to, co-ordinating the efforts of the different team members, and generally pulling the whole thing together. A thankless task? It can be, but Steve thinks everything's going pretty smoothly. He certainly sounded calm and collected when I spoke to him on the phone. "We've got everything pretty much under control," Steve said confidently. "At this moment in time, we've got 40 per cent of the tactical maps completed, and 60 per cent of the graphics for the objects that adorn the tactical playing area. We've also finished all the human sprites, and we're now moving on to start work on the aliens. If things go to plan we should have a Beta version of the game next month."

Coolness! However, if a game's going to slip, it will probably happen at the playtesting stage. Steve's confident that this won't happen with *Apocalypse*: "We'll have about eight QA (quality assurance) technicians who will spend two whole months playing the game from beginning to end. They'll compile a bug 'database' which will categorise bugs according to how serious they are and pass the list on to the programmers. For example, a class A bug would be something like a major crash that hangs the game, whereas a class B bug would be something like a minor graphical quirk. Obviously, the bigger problems will be dealt with first, but we'll get round to them all in the end." Sorted.

Steve Goss will be co-ordinating the team's efforts to ensure that everything runs according to plan.

Another month, another futuristic racing game. Paul Presley sees if this one has something new to offer.

Scorcher



I MUST BE GETTING OLD. I JUST DON'T understand what today's kids are talking about. I can't wear modern clothes. I spell mutha with an 'o' and an 'er'. And I just don't get this new 'music' (as I write I'm listening to an Andy Williams CD). So is it really any wonder I feel so alienated when playing a game whose biggest pull for others seems to be the fact that every session is accompanied by a thumping rave/house/hippity-hop theme? (*That's hip-hop you old fogey – Ed.*)

Scorcher, the latest race game to have a one-word title that begins with 'Sc', looks set to be a big winner with the kids. It's fast, frantic, slightly violent, and is set in a post-industrial 'cybery' world (well, it's dark a lot anyway), and has the aforementioned music blasting away from every speaker. No doubt many of you are jumping up and down now, shouting, "Cool" (or "Kewl" as you probably spell it), and well you should. It does look very, ahem, kewl indeed. But what is it like exactly?

(Left) Power-ups are collected by smashing straight through them. There's something strangely satisfying about demolishing something just so no one else can have it.

(Above) It may look dangerous but all the green ooze does is slow you down.

Funny you should ask

The racing takes place on giant energy-coated sphere type things. You sit atop a ball, the energy field covers you both and then off you zoom into one of four twisting, turning racetracks. Because of the energy field, which sort of repels everything you touch, and the spheroid nature of your machine, the moment you touch anything – ranging from an inconveniently placed barrel to a very conveniently placed wall – you suddenly start bouncing off pinball-style all over the bloody shop.

Now add to that some tracks that take the term 'twisty' and redefine it to mean 'bloody twisty with walls everywhere' and the chances of you

(Left) Pin-point accuracy is needed to negotiate the sloping sections. Either that or a quick press of the old jump key.

IN PRODUCTION

(Left) The only things that do break other than power-ups are these barriers. So despite the fact they slow you down, you'll still hit them every time.

(Above) Approaching a sharp turn and you're still in this race. Way to go! Oh, not enough speed huh? Never mind. They'll be around again in a minute to lap you.

Product details

Developer: Scavenger
Publisher: GT Interactive
Telephone: 0171-258 3791
Format: CD-ROM
Release date: End July

managing to get through a single lap without adding the word 'careening' to the lips of any commentators watching your progress are slimmer than Slimmy the Slim Slimmer, champion Slimmer of the National Slimmer's Association, on a 200-calorie a day diet.

What do you mean, padding?

All of this wouldn't be too daunting a challenge if it weren't for the other racers on the track. When you start each race you'll usually see them in front of you (whichever of the traditional viewpoints you decide to use), but the moment the lights turn green and the race is on, you'll usually only see them as they lap you once again. Either that or you'll manage to keep up with them but then discover that you've somehow got to get past them without touching anyone or anything and turning the whole shebang into a production of 'Look Ma, The Balls Are Bouncing Wildly'.

Finally, throw in a few gaps in the track, a couple of ramp-assisted jumps, some barrels, boxes, crates and barriers, the odd tunnel and a couple of crazy stunt sections (such as loop-de-loops) and you're in for a right old time of it.

So is there anything to offer some respite from all these heady challenges? Well fortunately, yes. First of all your trusty craft is equipped with a handy thrust option which allows you to temporarily boost your speed to that of a rabbit in heat. Secondly you have a 'jumping' facility that allows you to soar high into the sky, thus avoiding troubling things like holes in the road and mines and the track. These both have limited power levels though, and have to be constantly boosted by way of picking up (or rather smashing into) the relevant power-ups dotted about the place. Of course, everyone else is also after them...

High and dry

Aside from the problems you'll have to negotiate within the game, *Scorcher* looks and sounds a treat. As I mentioned at the start it has a fully customisable musical score, containing everything the techno-lover could ever need in a tune (well, I use the term 'tune', but if I'm honest, to me it just sounds like someone hitting a Bontempi organ randomly with a ball-peen hammer. Whatever happened to Johnny Mathis?). Graphically it's all in swanky SVGA (with some lo-res options for those of us with less-endowed machines) and moves along at a fair old rate.

And that's about it. *Scorcher* is fast, hip, trendy and young – and it makes me feel about seventy. So it'd better hope that I'm not the one that gets to review it next month or else I might be mean to it just out of spite. But then I'm like that. (*Sad you mean? – Ed.*) Z

(Below left) Mines are dangerous and explode the moment you touch them. This won't kill you but it will stop you for a vital second or two.

Prezzer's ideal race game

For me the perfect racing game would run along the following lines:

- It would be set in or near the South of France in the middle of summer.
- The tracks would be a long, winding mountain road or a drive through some vineyards.
- The cars on offer would be an open-top 1968 Cadillac Eldorado or an Aston Martin DB7.
- There'd be a rear-view that shows the driver wearing sunglasses and a long flowing scarf.
- The music would all be from the mid-to-late '70s.
- The maximum speed limit would be 30mph.
- There'd be regular picnic stops and your boot would contain a hamper with chilled champagne and smoked salmon.
- The opposition would be a succession of good-looking blondes in fast cars.
- There'd be a bonus 'Chemin de Fer' game if you make good time.

So how about it? I'm sure someone out there must be interested. You could call it 'Easy Driving' or 'International Playboy Simulator' or something. *(You sad James Bond wannabe – Ed.)*

REVIEW ZONE

Is *Hind* the definitive helicopter sim? Digital Integration unleash the next in their Virtual Battleground series of simulations... but how does it fare against all the other chopper games? Page 50.

THE ZONE SCORING SYSTEM

90+ *CLASSIC*
The highest accolade a game can attain. A wonderful example of gaming excellence that deserves to be recognised and indeed cherished, or something.

20 and below *PANTS*
Absolutely bloody awful. Crap with a capital C. Naff with a capital N. You get the picture.

80–89 *RECOMMENDED*
An excellent game that simply lacks that certain something that makes it one of the true greats. Well worth checking out though.

486 FRIENDLY
The DX2 is still one of the most popular spec machines, but how do you know what games will run on the thing? This icon shows you which games you can still enjoy even if you don't have a ninja Pentium.

Looking back

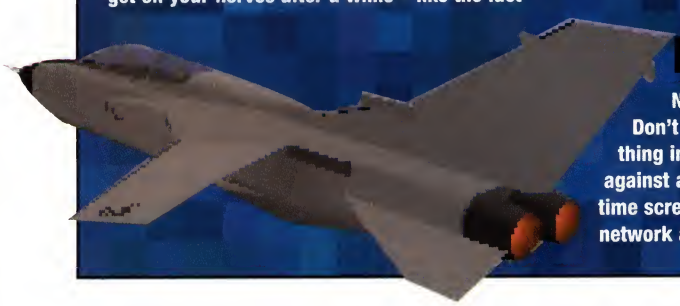
EF2000

It's been quite a while since we spooged so significantly over DI's awesome combat sim, and having spent the last six or seven months with the thing, it has to be said that it still stands as the best fighter simulation around. Forget *Falcon* and *Jetfighter II* and all the others – *EF2000* is still the dog's bollocks. It looks fantastic, has one of the most 'realistic' artificial intelligence systems that we've ever seen in a flight sim... and most importantly it has a campaign mode that has you fighting in a war that is pretty believable in the way that it pans out.

When you've played something for a long time though, there are a number of tiny little things that start to niggle away at you. None of them are earth-shatteringly important, but all of them get on your nerves after a while – like the fact that when you get into a really bad scrap you only ever get battle damage on your left wing... why? Or the fact that sometimes your supposedly loyal wingmen have a tendency to just bugger off and do their own thing.

Something else that has transpired, somewhat predictably, is the issue of PC system requirements. When we reviewed the game way back in our October 1995 issue we saw an unoptimised copy of the game that ran pretty slowly on just about everything (in hi-res). When the final copy arrived we discovered that the game would run fine as long as you have a good graphics card with loads of on-board memory. It's a weird but unfortunate fact that *EF2000* will even run slowly on a P133 – that is, unless you've got a pretty gob-smacking graphics card.

John Davison



NETWORK GAMES

Network *Doom*, don't you just love it? Don't you think it's absolutely the most fab thing in the whole world to go head-to-head against a group of human opponents, all the time screaming abuse at every one on the network and loudly proclaiming that you're 'the best'? Personally speaking, I *do* think multi-player gaming is the best thing ever, but I'm sure that most of you are reading this wondering what the bloody hell I'm on about. I mean, let's face it, how many of you have access to a four-terminal network on which you can enjoy the pleasures of multi-player gaming? Not many, I'll wager. This is not a major problem at the moment (*Duke Nukem 3D* and *Dark Forces* for example are superb single-player games) but *Quake*, for instance, will concentrate primarily on its multi-player aspects, with the single-player option being there merely for appearances sake. How do *you* lot feel about this? Are you willing to suffer monster phone bills to play on BT's

PROCESSOR HUNGRY

Some games run slowly, even on high-spec machines with ninjascopic graphics cards. Just run something like *Magic Carpet* in hi-res on virtually any PC and you end with something running in Jerk-o-vision.

WINDOWS 95

Speaks for itself really – if it's got this icon slapped on it, it's been designed to take advantage of all that Windows 95 offers.

90+	CLASSIC
80-89	RECOMMENDED
70-79	GOOD
50-69	AVERAGE
40-49	BELOW AVERAGE
20-39	POOR
20 and below	PANTS

Thanks to

- Owen O'Brien
- Nick Thingy at EA
- Simon Byron
- Jim Beavan

(Below) *Space Hulk* comes a callin'...

(Right) 'ello Tosh!

PC Zone **use Gateway 2000 PCs exclusively 'cause they're absolutely fab. If you want any more info about Gateway 2000 machines, you can call them on:**

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GATEWAY2000

"You've got a friend in the business."

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A round-up of the month's other full price and budget releases.

Wireplay set-up just so you can experience the multi-player phenomena? We at *Zone* want to know your feelings on network games. Drop us a line at the usual address, or e-mail us. We'll be running a feature that looks at this issue in detail in a few month's time – send me your thoughts on the subject and I'll make sure that we answer all your multi-player questions.

Chris Anderson

STAR TREK DS9: Harbinger

As we close this issue of *PC Zone*, the game occupying the number one spot in the game charts is *Star Trek DS9: Harbinger* from CIC/Viacom.

When we reviewed it last month, our very own Macca (a complete Trek-head if ever there was one) gave it a rather underwhelming score of just 52 per cent, with the comment "Deep Cack Poo". And yet, despite the score (which incidentally, is not at odds with any other publication) thousands of people (presumably mad keen *DS9* fans) dashed out to their nearest games emporium, slapped forty big ones on the counter and hot-footed it back to their pad clutching a copy of "Deep Cack Poo". Hence it went straight in at number one.

Of course, it will probably disappear from the charts as quickly as it entered them, but that withstanding, it just goes to shows the pulling-power of certain licenses. Traditionally, licensed products (especially film licenses) have been best avoided (anyone remember *Blown Away* or that terrible *Beverly Hillbillies* game?). That said, there have been some good ones too; namely the original *Star Trek* adventures from Interplay, the new *Star Trek* stuff from MicroProse and of course the LucasArts *Star Wars* games. *Top Gun* wasn't bad either. More often than not though, they're a missed opportunity.

Looking ahead, we can expect to see the *Die Hard Trilogy* in a few month's time and *The X-Files* early next year from Fox – two excellent licenses that warrant fantastic games. Let's hope they get the code they deserve and don't turn out to be just another couple of cleverly marketed dodos.

Jeremy Wells

Cool games

We see hundreds of games over the months but there are a few that we hang on to and continue to play at lunchtime/when we're supposed to be doing more important stuff...

- Duke Nukem 3D
- Terra Nova
- Civilization 2
- EF2000
- PGA European Tour

Crap games

There are some games that you can leave in the middle of the room with a big sign next to them saying "please steal me" and you still can't get rid of the bloody things...

- Deadline
- Shakii the Wolf
- Deep Space 9
- Congo
- Virtual Snooker

HIND

PC ZONE CLASSIC

The Hind is large, ugly and not especially easy to get on with. That makes Simon Bradley the natural choice to review this simulation.

MANY YEARS AGO, EVEN BEFORE BILL Gates was rich, a guy called Igor Sikorsky made a helicopter with an enclosed cabin. Not only did this contraption fly, but it was actually possible to do something with it. Not a lot, but something. Now, progress being what it is, it wasn't long before helicopters became reliable and useful. At which point, the military became interested and started to throw money at new manufacturers to persuade them to hang nasty, pointed things on their previously quite harmless devices.

The Americans invented the helicopter gunship during the Vietnam conflict, bolting machine guns and rockets onto every possible point on their Huey transport cabs. Later, they refined the concept into the HueyCobra, the first ever dedicated helicopter gunship.

Across the Iron Curtain the Russians were on a similar path, although they had little need for a Huey type assault chopper for their own forces. They had many, many allies in other parts of the world who were keen to strap as many offensive devices as possible to their Mi-8 transports. And, competition being what it is, they just had to come up with a proper gunship as well. So they did. They called it the Mi-24. NATO called it the Hind. Why? Because all Russian helicopters were given code words beginning with 'H'. Fighters begin with 'F', bombers with 'B'.

Being Russians, the designers at Mil Helikopter didn't just design a gunship. If you ever visit Russia, you will see that they rarely have anything which has only one purpose, especially in the military. So you'll see people shopping on their tractors, production lines building prams and fighter planes, gunship helicopters with room for eight troops in the back.

After a brief and rather unsuccessful first design, the Hind was unleashed on a tremulous NATO as the bogeyman we were all afraid of. It was big, heavy, fast and carried more firepower than the average British helicopter squadron in one aircraft. Amid rumours of awesome air-to-air capability and unreasonable damage capacities, NATO battlefield pilots throughout Europe shat themselves and prayed for peace.

Then came Afghanistan. Six months in and CNN and the BBC teams started sending back film of shot-down helicopters. Not just any old thing, but Hinds.

(Above) Although not heavily texture-mapped, all of the graphics are very complex polygon models, much like those found in SSI's *SU-27*.

(Right) The cockpit may not be that pretty but it's an accurate representation.

(Above) As far as we're aware, *Hind* is the first simulation to show individual troops on the ground. It certainly adds humour to the proceedings, that's for sure.

Late model Hinds. Lots of them. Nobody knows (or if they do, they aren't telling) how many Hinds were lost in the Afghan campaign, but it blew all the rumours away. The sheer size and weight of the Hind were its worst enemies.

Once the Mujahideen started to get decent SAMs, (American Stingers, which of course were not supplied by the CIA), the Hind attrition rate went through the roof. Make no mistake, we still didn't want to get on the wrong end of one, but at least we saw that it could be beaten, which helped a lot. As an aside, the result of all this was that the Americans got really complacent and the Russians developed the Werewolf. Now we're back to where we were, only the Werewolf really is as scary as the rumours suggest.

Okay, enough war stories

Fine, let's look in the box, shall we? *Hind* is, as usual, a CD-only release, which comes with the normal readable but intense DI manual and a rather useful quick reference guide. It installs without fuss, and seems to auto-detect sound cards without any odd effects. The introductory sequence is excellent – even better than the one which started *Apache* – and everything works as advertised. The main screen gives the normal options, quickstart, single mission, campaign, mission planner and network play as well as offering the facility to manually change detail levels, sounds, flight models and so on. No surprises so far, then.

Firing up a single mission puts you into a briefing screen which will be familiar to you if you have played *Tornado* or *Apache*, and will bring you out in a cold sweat if you haven't. Get through that and into the cockpit. Here's the first surprise. No digital displays, MFDs or radar. Just a fully manual cockpit with clockwork dials and lots of pretty blue background. Hop into the gunner's seat for a similar visual treat, only with less dials and more, well, gunnery bits.

The whole thing is presented in the crisp, clear, detailed way which we have come to expect from DI. As, of course, is the outside world. That means that there's less detail than some other offerings, there's no texture-mapped terrain, no fantastically detailed trees. And it's no great loss either. The sky looks like sky, complete with clouds and so on. The ground looks like ground, albeit a little featureless. The hills and mountains look pretty cool. Overall, I reckon it works okay.

Ah, did you say something about a mission planner?

Yes. The planner gives you the facility to accept your mission as briefed, move waypoints to take advantage of terrain or what-ever, change your time on target (as well as that of your wingmen), do pretty well anything you like. It's seriously powerful. It's also seriously difficult to use. *Tornado* first gave us this little delight, and it took Duncan a whole page just to explain it. Not being one for reinventing the wheel, I'm not going to do that – you want a more detailed

(Above) Although the troops have a tendency to look well... er, stupid... in these screenshots, the way that they act throughout the game is very impressive indeed.

description, either talk to the *Zone* back issues people or buy the game. Suffice to say, the planner gives you the power to completely mess up a perfectly good mission profile and guarantee that the Widows and Orphans fund for your squadron will take a damn good pounding when you take off.

Of course, you can patiently work your way through the system, learning all its features and gradually getting fully up to speed with all the tools until you are fully able to fine tune each mission to your exact requirements, while making sure that you still land in time for tea. Or you can just leave it alone, read the briefing and fly the mission as offered. Works every time for me.

Okay, I'm convinced. So can I fly it now?

Um, yes why not – but be prepared for the next surprise. You see, the Hind is not like other helicopters. More accurately, *Hind* does not fly like any other helicopter simulator. Until now, the folk who decide what we get to fly have concentrated on the mainstream stuff. That means more Apache and Falcon simulations than you can shake a big stick at, and not a whole lot else (mark my words, the Comanche and F22 will be the next to get the treatment).

So anyway, the chances are that if you have flown a proper helicopter simulator before, it will have been an Apache. And the Hind is kind of different. Actually that isn't quite true. The Hind is totally different. This is a large, heavy, unstable beast which dates back to the '60s and has all the problems (sorry, features) which go with that heritage. No semi-rigid rotors here. No hi-tech materials. No vast surplus of power. No powered controls. No Ferrari-like response. In short, we're looking at a dinosaur. And it behaves like one too.

The pilot (brain) gives a command, and some time later it works its way through to the rotors (limbs) and something happens. The control responses in *Hind* are so sluggish that sometimes you think there's a machine problem. On low power there's virtually no response at all to pitch commands, and it's possible to get into a totally non- recoverable situation alarmingly easily. If you have the flight model set to Realistic – and who doesn't? – *(Er, a lot of people – Ed.)* you can also get the pleasure of vortex rings, transitional lift, retreating blade stall and Pilot Induced Oscillation. This baby bites. Hard. And then it chews and spits the bits back at you. The strange thing is that despite all this, it's actually quite a good cab once you get the hang of it. Anyway, the long and the short of it is that *Hind* is not even a little bit easy. It's sluggish, heavy and departs from controlled flight given half a chance. Other than that, it's fine.

10 things you never knew about the Hind

1. It held the world speed and altitude records for helicopters for ages.
2. It has the worst crash survival rates of any other aircraft flying.
3. If you get an Autorotation wrong, it will turn upside down.
4. It's descended from the Mi-8 family of cargo and passenger helicopters.
5. You think this one is ugly? You should see the first ones.
6. Modified ones were flown into the smoke at Chernobyl to monitor damage.
7. They survived that fine. Unlike the crews, who didn't do so well.
8. NATO now use the Hinds acquired when Germany reunited.
9. They really do fly this badly.
10. Intentionally blank. (I've always wanted to say that.)

Go on then, tell us about the flight model

Well, if you insist. Basically there are two flight models available: arcade and realistic. Arcade still has some of the problems, but not the serious ones. Realistic is, odd though it may seem, realistic. Having flown both this and a real Hind, I am happy to say that DI are pretty close here. I'm reliably informed that the entire flight engine has been redesigned and reworked from *Apache* to give an even more accurate feel. It's not perfect, although by the time it hits the streets that may be sorted out, but it isn't bad. In fact, it's really rather good.

Don't you normally go on about networks too?

Yes, I do. But that's only because having a partner is so much better than playing with yourself. Assuming you agree, this bit should make you happy. *Hind* will support loads of multi-play options. You can have a direct serial link, or a modem to allow two players, or you can have up to eight (at present, maybe more later) on a network. Plus, you can link up with machines running *Apache* for a frenzy of thrashing rotors and blazing cannons. Tip for *Hind* drivers: stay low and fast, and prepare to get shot down a lot. You do also get the

(Below) A certain amount of fun can be had from being a completely evil bastard and just mowing people down.

In perspective

This 'In Perspective' is for propeller heads only – for gamers it would be the other way round, with *Longbow* out in front.

Hind

Apache

Longbow

Comanche

really neat pilot/gunner options from *Apache*, although sadly that's still two-player only. They say that there's too much work involved in making that work for more than one aircraft, but I still reckon that having eight of you working together in four aircraft would be a laugh. Maybe I'm just very sad.

But I have no friends. Can I still play?

Of course. The usual choice of single player missions are on offer: either one-offs or as part of a campaign. You get to fly in Korea, Afghanistan or Kazakhstan. The Afghan campaign is based on actual events shortly before the Mujahideen started to get Stingers. The missions are hard, but rewarding when complete. You could always advertise for mates to play with over the wires.

Hmmm, doesn't sound like anything new...

No, it doesn't. That's because it basically isn't anything new. Sure, it's an unusual aircraft, but that probably isn't enough.

No, *Hind* stands out because the aircraft can carry troops. And that means you get missions delivering them. And others bringing back the remains. But the great thing is the way they behave. They run, they drop to the ground, they fire, they advance. They get shot, fall over and retreat. They'll get straight back into your cab if the mood takes them. The best way to stop this is to dump them and take off straight away. Works wonders for survivability, too. And it's almost impossible to get them to give you fire support as you come in. Mind you, they soon get stuck in if an enemy unit fires on them, so all you need to do is provoke a stray shell...

(Above) The Hind itself is possibly one of the most vicious aircraft around.

As well as playing with ground troops, you get to do all sorts of other politically incorrect things that although other folk do them, only DI have thus far had the balls to include. So you can drop land mines (area denial missions), use fuel and air bombs (that's Napalm to you and me) and generally rearrange the countryside to suit your needs.

So, at the end of the day, what do you reckon?

If you're into helicopters, you'll probably buy this anyway. But rest assured, you're making a smart move. If you aren't into helicopters, this probably won't get you into them. In fact, if this is your first helicopter sim, stick it on arcade mode until you get used to it, or think about getting *Apache* instead. It's far too difficult to be fun instantly, and even with a fair amount of experience, it's hardly a laugh a minute. But it's very satisfying when everything comes together, although bloody hard work.

There are a whole load of features, which make *Hind* worth having. It certainly flies well, and the way that the troops have been done is really very impressive. The network options are pretty good, and being able to go up against Apaches is a major plus. In fact, the only thing I really dislike is the pseudo-Cyrillic writing in the interface and the English writing in the cockpit. Hopefully, that will be gone by the time it hits the streets. In short, *Hind* is pretty good, and generally worth buying. It's a little different too. Whether that is enough remains to be seen. **Z**

(Below left) "Hey Bert, what's that there? It sure is purty ain't it?"

(Below right) The ugliest aircraft ever conceived.

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb (16Mb recommended)

Processor: 486DX2/66 (P75 recommended)

Graphics: SVGA

Sound: SoundBlaster, Ad Lib, Roland

Controls: Joystick, rudders, ThrustMaster, Flightstick Pro, keyboard

Score

90

One of the best if you're a propeller head.

Price: £44.99 **Release Date:** June
Publisher: Digital Integration
Tel: 01276 684959

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

Hind vs Longbow

OKAY, SO THIS MONTH'S A BIT OF A propeller-fest. It's not very often that we get two extremely high quality simulations in the office which deal with similar subject matter.

Anyway, here we have it... the review here of *Hind*, which dear Mr Bradley has given 90 per cent to, and over the page... ooh, it's *Longbow* from EA which has also received 90 per cent. Both of 'em are classic games but if you read the reviews you'll see that they're actually very different.

Gameplay vs realism

The difference between the two products is that they appear to be aimed at very different markets and both manage to exploit their strengths very well. *Hind* is the perfect product for the real prop-heads who like everything hyper-realistic at the expense of presentation, while *Longbow* appears to have been designed first and foremost as a game rather than as a simulation. Sure, it has some extremely realistic features and it even teaches you how to fly a helicopter, but when the shit comes down it has been designed to be fun. The real contrasts between the two games come in a variety of areas – *Longbow* is pretty, has superb music and a gorgeous interface but... it has no network facilities, it comes on two CDs, needs 97MB of hard disk space and is one of the most sluggish simulations you'll ever load onto your PC – unless of course you're lucky enough to have a Grand Master TurboNinjaBastard of a PC.

Hind on the other hand runs better on lower spec machines, (almost certainly because it...) doesn't look as good, does have networking and has been designed to convey what it's like to fly a *Hind*... pure and simple (and bloody hard!).

So why the same score?

Well... although the subject matter is pretty similar, the things are so completely different to play that you realise that people who really like one, will almost certainly not like the other. *Hind* fans (people who like games like *SU-27* and *Tornado* and enjoy reading manuals) will find *Longbow* trivial and irritating (especially during the flying lessons) while *Longbow* fans (people who like *US Navy Fighters* and *Top Gun*) will find *Hind* boring, drawn out and anally retentive. Bearing all the differences in mind it seems that both games are of equal merit, but for utterly different reasons. Capiche? **Z**

(Top right) *Hind's* graphics are sparse but extremely detailed whereas...

(Middle right) *Longbow* features lush texture-mapped polygons that eat into processor power.

Jane's AH-64D Longbow

PC ZONE CLASSIC

When Duncan MacDonald was eight he threw a sycamore seed over the edge of a cliff. This makes him one of our resident helicopter experts (etc etc).

CHOPPER PILOTS, WHEN ASKED about their trade, always say: "It's really, really hard to control a helicopter", and add that only very special people can manage it; only really gifted people who are also extremely hard, extremely brave and (this last one is always hinted, never said) have a gigantic whanger. But they would put that story about, wouldn't they? That way when a chopper pilot is at a dinner party and the obligatory 'unaccompanied tasty chick' asks what he and the chap sitting next to him do for a living, it'll go like this...

(Below) As you can see from both of these screenshots, the quality of the graphics is vastly superior to almost any other sim around at the moment.

Chap: Well, er, I work in a custard factory. You probably think it sounds rather boring, but it isn't really. In fact, it's quite demanding. You see I'm responsible for making sure the custard powder vat cooling pipes remain within three to five degrees of...
Helicopter pilot: *(Interrupting)* I'm a helicopter pilot.
Tasty chick: I read you loud and clear, fly-boy. Let's auto-rotate to the master bedroom!
Helicopter pilot: Roger to that!

Know what I mean? But if the truth ever got out – and the world and his wife discovered that controlling a helicopter is actually not much harder than controlling a car – then *everyone* would be an aviator. Let's repeat the above scenario with this thought in mind...

Tasty chick: So what do you guys do for a living?'
Chap: I'm a helicopter pilot!
Helicopter pilot: *(Shit!)* Um, I'm a helicopter pilot too.
Tasty chick: How dull. I'm a helicopter pilot myself. As is my grandmother. So what about you? Hello? Yes, you... the ugly bastard over there.
Bloke we haven't met yet: Uh? Me? Well, I started off as a helicopter pilot, obviously, but it was so pedestrian I gave it up. I'm an ice-cream man these days. I own my own van.
Tasty chick: *(Licking lips)* Then mine's a 99, Mister Freeze! Let's chill out in the master bedroom.
Ice-cream man: I'll unsheath my lolly immediately!

Don't be ridiculous...

"Don't be ridiculous," some folk will cry. "You actually said back there that flying a helicopter is *not much harder than driving a car*. That's clearly way, way, way over the top!"

But is it really? After all, think on this... Noel Edmonds. Get the drift? And think also on this: Mike Smith. You might counter with the fact that Mike Smith crashed his. And yes, he did. But I'd double counter with the fact that he's still alive, and, as pilots are so fond of saying, "a good landing is one you walk away from". QED.

But all this is irrelevant...

If you're already a 'veteran' of computer helicopter simulations, and are a deeply serious kind of person, then I agree that up until now you'll have been feeling a wee bit annoyed. After all, you simply want to know what you can actually *do* in *Longbow*. I'm right, aren't I? You just

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb
Processor: 486DX/66 (P133 recommended)
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Joystick, ThrustMaster FCS, rudder pedals, keyboard

want to know about the keyboard functions, the weapons systems, the this, the that, and the other. So I dedicate the next paragraph entirely to you. (Normal people can rejoin later.)

SHIFT F1, ALT P, CTRL Q, etc...

Longbow is as complicated as you hoped it was going to be. Maybe even more so. Forgetting the mission structures and stuff for the moment, let's home in on the keyboard commands. Jesus! Where to start? Let's put it like this, though: do you reckon you could memorise 50 car registration numbers? Yes? Ah, but could you recite them all, making no mistakes, while someone is trying to kill you? Yes? Blimey, and the scary thing is I believe you. Anyway, you'll be using SHIFT, ALT and CTRL in conjunction with nearly every key on the keyboard due to the fact that every readout mode has another readout mode up its sleeve (and another in its sock, by cracky).

But I got onto the subject of the seriously complex interface by bypassing the overall game structure and whatnot, which, as luck would have it, is pretty simple to explain, seeing as how it's the same as in every other aircraft simulation in the entire universe. Here we go then: Quickstart (kill everything you see); Single Missions (200 of them, generated randomly once you've sewn the basic seeds of location, weather, time of day, difficulty and so on); Historic Missions (wanna do a real life Gulf War thang? Panama Crisis? Go ahead!); Campaign (an FMV news broadcast followed by a zillion missions. More FMV news footage followed by another zillion missions. Repeat until dead).

I could continue, but you know the drill like the back of your hand. It comes down to whether or not the rewards (as in medals and citations) are worth the trouble. Or, to put it another way, is the combat enjoyable? Are the graphics worth writing home about? And is it realistic? For instance, were real Apache and Longbow helicopter pilots involved in the making and testing? Is the whole thing dripping with atmosphere? Does the manual weigh nine tons? Does the tie-in with Jane's mean there's a complete on-line aircraft reference work like there was in *ATF*? And the answers, I'm more than happy to inform you, are resounding yes's. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. So, paragraph over, and back to those who aren't so enlightened. *(Or sad – Ed.)*

(Above) Not the most advisable thing to do in any helicopter... but the sort of thing you always try and do in a game like this.

What's a helicopter again?

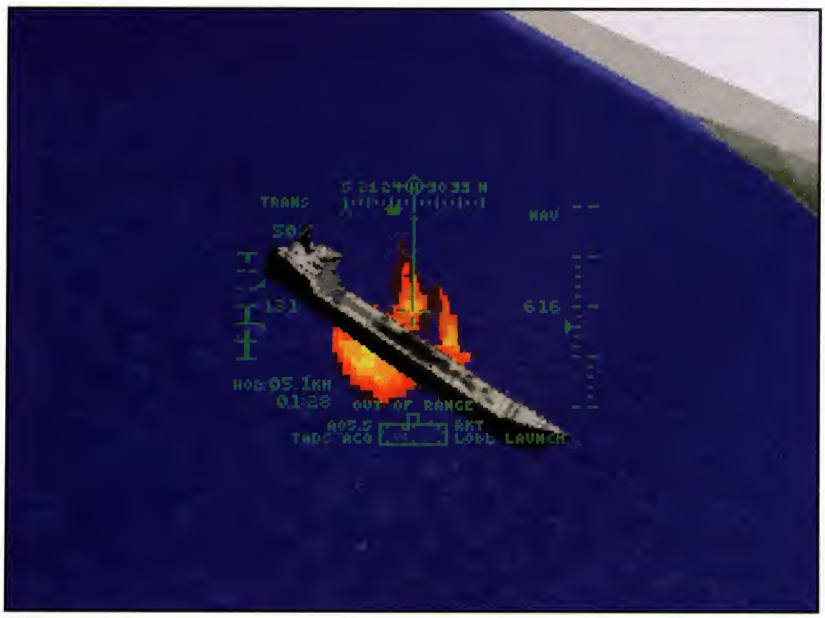
Okay, I apologise, but it's fun being patronising occasionally. And anyhow, I still want to squeeze this whole 'helicopters are hard' thing by the balls until its eyes water.

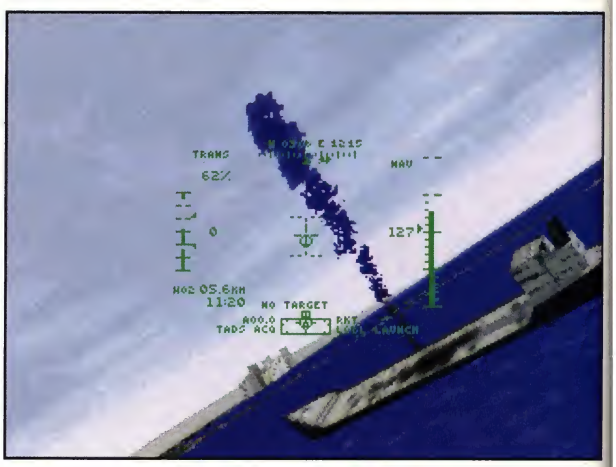
Longbow, you see, has an absolutely fantastic Tutorial Mode. It's like going to school again. Or taking a first driving

(Left) Er... A complex move called the er... MacDonald manoeuvre.

Helicopter technology explained...

Mr Donald Atkins of Hull fields some questions from his daughter Kylie (age 6).
Kylie: Daddy, why don't helicloppers have wings?
Donald: *(He doesn't know)* Um. Er, they don't need them, darling.
Kylie: So how do they go in the air then?
Donald: It's, er, it's, er... um, they're magic.
Kylie: Are they like Dumbo?
Donald: *(Eh?)* Erm, yes. Yes.
Kylie: Is Budgie like Dumbo?
Donald: Yes. Yes.
Kylie: Are the Power Rangers helicopters?
Donald: Erm, erm, yes....
(Continued on page 94.)





(Left) Attacking poor defenceless ships is always fun when you have a fully armoured helicopter gunship.

(Above) Die! Die! Die! Bwahahahahahahahah! Ahem.

lesson. Your instructor, to make things even better, speaks in a gung-ho yankee drawl – and if you mess up, he shouts at you. (Mind you, even when he's just telling you that you need to press key 'R' to start the engine he's pretty manic. This guy's on the edge of losing it. He's tops.) As with a real-life helicopter lesson, he familiarises you with the instruments, demonstrates a move, and then hands over control, allowing you to have a bash for yourself. "Yooo *haave* control," he shouts, stressing bizarre words as only bonkers Yanks can do. "Aaah want *yooo* to *add* collective aaand riiise *to* an altittoood *of* fiver zero zero feet." You faff about for 30 seconds, pressing some wrong buttons. He cuts in, louder than before: "Aaaah said riiise to *an* altittoood *of* fiver zero zero feet!" Thirty seconds later: "You *will* riiise TO an altittood OF fiver zero zero!!!" (It's worth having some valiums handy, honest.)

Before you know it, though, you're on lesson, say, three...

"We *aaare* now gunna learn *about* taaarget acquisition aaand iiidentifikay-shun!" screams Crazy Bastard. "We *will* be heading towaaarrrd *a-waypoint* one! I repeat a-waypoint *one*! Firrrst Aaah want you *to* riiise to *an* altittoood *of* two hunnnerd and a-fifty feet!"

You start the engine. RPM reaches 100%. You apply 120% collective, put a bit of poke into the tail rotor so you'll be facing the waypoint before he even asks you to, reach 200 feet, gently reduce collective to 60%, centre the pedals (or keyboard bracket keys if you haven't got all that poncey anorak kit), and, wahay, you hit the 250 foot mark spot on. 'What's he going to say? What's he going to say?' You're not left wondering for long: "Well done," he bellows. A slight pause, then he continues: "You *will* now approach a-waypoint one. En-rowt Ahhh *will* explain some *of* the symbology on a-your IHADSS!"

But you're not listening. You're on the other side of the room, phoning all your friends. "He actually said 'Well Done'," you tell them, proudly. "Piss off you pathetic tosser," they reply, hanging up.

It's a piece of piss...

Once Major General Mad Shouting Bastard has passed you fit for service (we're talking two and a half hours worth of lessons here), you feel pretty confident. You really do. You've covered instrumentation, basic flight, navigation, defensive counter-measures (a hoot), sensors and weapons systems (a night-marish gung-ho high-decibel yelling session), and, finally, strategy and tactics.

And guess what? Out of the mass of knowledge you've taken on-board, you suddenly realise that only a small portion has been 'how to control a helicopter'. In other words you may still be a bit shaky on multiple FFAR delivery in LOBL mode and a little uncertain on how to set up a PFZ... but you could fly a chopper through the Mersey Tunnel. (Backwards.)

So, suddenly, that already tried (but instantly failed) historically accurate Gulf War mission begins to look good again. With the flight model set to hyper-sensitive, and the indestructibility option turned off, it's time to test your mettle against Saddam Hussein's completely unprepared and totally under-equipped ground troops. And hey, if you want to be completely realistic, why not engage in a bit of friendly fire as well? (Wingman first, naturally.)

(Below) The night missions are some of the most visually effective of any sim.

Dear Anne, my PC is shit...

I reviewed this game on a P133 in hi-res, with detail on full (there are the usual three stock toggles and a customiser). It looked fantabulous, as you can see from the shots, but the frame rate could still have been better... and there were actually some severe jerko-moments (such as when flying through smoke from a destroyed target). Time for the major test though. Time for the culture shock of moving down to lo-res. Trepidation city. And the result? Wahay! Good news. Where as most 'new generation' games look shit in lo-res (especially after you've seen them in hi), *Longbow* still makes the grade. Or it does in lo-res on the upper detail settings, that is. Stick things right down to minimus saddus and a lot of the atmosphere disappears. But you don't really need me to tell you that, do you? Upgrade, upgrade. Yes, I know you're skint. So steal a car and flog it or something. I don't know... **Z**

Score

90

A completely and utterly spanky helicopter doofer type affair containing a mad bloke who shouts!

Price: £44.99 **Release Date:** June
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Tel: 01753 549442

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

PC ZONE

This has to be a first... a keyboard overlay with virtually every key on the keyboard used. EA's contender for the helicopter simulation throne is certainly one of the best we've seen and certainly looks pretty fab. Check out the review this month on page 56.

INS	LOBL/LOAL MISSILE LAUNCH MODES	4 (NUMERIC PAD)	PAN LEFT
DEL	ASE RANGES	6 (NUMERIC PAD)	PAN RIGHT
PAGE UP	AIR/GROUND RADAR MODES	8 (NUMERIC PAD)	PAN UP
PAGE DOWN	RADAR RANGES	2 (NUMERIC PAD)	PAN DOWN

FRONT VIEW	LEFT VIEW	RIGHT VIEW	HELMET VIEW

CHASE VIEW	NEXT OBJECT VIEW	NEXT TARGET VIEW	PLAYER'S MISSILE VIEW

INCOMING MISSILE VIEW	PLAYER TO NEXT TARGET VIEW	NEXT TARGET TO PLAYER VIEW	DEATH VIEW

JUMP IN AND FLY THE MISSION

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	_/-	+/=	←
COLLECTIVE 10%	COLLECTIVE 20%	COLLECTIVE 30%	COLLECTIVE 40%	COLLECTIVE 50%	COLLECTIVE 60%	COLLECTIVE 70%	COLLECTIVE 80%	COLLECTIVE 90%	COLLECTIVE 100%	- COLLECTIVE -1% FINE	+ COLLECTIVE +1% FINE	WEAPONS

AH 64D LONGBOW

This keyboard template has been created by *PC Zone* for purchasers of the game *AH 64D Longbow* published by Electronic Arts.
It is not approved or endorsed in any way by Electronic Arts.
All rights recognised.

A	S	W	CTRL + W	R	T	H	J	P	L	CTRL + L	O	[	]	ENTER
AUTO PILOT	SALVO SIZE	NEXT WAYPOINT	PREVIOUS WAYPOINT	ROTOR	NEXT TARGET	HOVER HOLD	RADAR JAMMER	PNVS	LOCK ON OBJECT	RELOCK TADS	OPTIONS MENU	ROTOR LEFT	ROTOR RIGHT	FIRE CANNON

Z	X	C	B	ALT + N	M	CTRL + M	SPACEBAR	,	.	<	>	Q	Y
ZOOM IN TADS	ZOOM OUT TADS	CHAFF	BRAKES	NAV MAP	MASTER MODES	MASTER ARM	FIRE WEAPON	NEXT LEFT MFD	NEXT RIGHT MFD	PREVIOUS LEFT MFD	PREVIOUS RIGHT MFD	QUIT MISSION	NEXT FRIENDLY

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Duke Nukem 3D

PC ZONE Classic

(Left) D'you want breast or leg meat, sir? Ah...

(Right) Earth. It makes you think about the inconsequentiality of our tiny lives, doesn't it? Well, maybe not.

Take *Duke Nukem 3D*. Add Patrick McCarthy. Fry lightly in olive oil (not much, as he's quite fatty in his own right), with finely chopped garlic and chili (to taste). Drain and serve with a salad accompaniment. (Well, you think of a bloody intro then.)

FORGET, FOR A MOMENT, ALL THIS wanky "*Duke's* better than *Quake*/ No it isn't" stuff. *Duke's* here, *Quake* isn't. *Quake* is going to be a stunning game. But it isn't here yet. So let's talk about *Duke*, shall we? Basically, it's a great game. It's inventive, amusing, cool, and it's very hard. Most of you will probably have already played the shareware version, but some won't, so here's a quick run-down:

It's a *Doom*-clone, but better – buildings, for example, are proper buildings, with several floors and huge James Bond-style disappearing computer consoles. There are outsidey bits, and you can fly about with a jetpack, land on the roof of a building and work your way down through it. You can catch a tube, or go into the sewers and shoot sharks. You can shuttle around space stations with earth in the background. There are video monitors that you can use to check out your surroundings, and walls that can be blown out completely, allowing access to other areas. There are suspended walkways that can be brought crashing to the ground. There are ventilation shafts that you can get inside and crawl about in, emerging somewhere else. Most things (but not enough of them, some say) can be shot or blown up: windows, lights – you can even shoot aliens in the toilets, prompting all the usual "blowing the shit out of them" jokes. It has

Opposite page:
(Left) Another one of those bloody cold sore ads.

(Right) Don't *they* feel silly, with their teeny weeny gennies.

(Bottom left) Bang.

(Bottom right) I told you that satellite TV was bad for you.

Registered weapons

One of the many extras the registered version gives you is a whole new range of fab things to do to alien scum. Some are impressive, some are funny and some are just plain spiteful – and they're all really cool in DukeMatch.

SHRINKER

A weapon that was captured from the aliens, who used to have all sorts of fun with it at parties. Shoot it at someone and they're temporarily miniaturised, leaving them (whoo-ha-hargh) extremely vulnerable to The Stomping Boot Of Death. Can also be used on yourself when fired at a mirror, enabling you to visit places which were previously inaccessible. Like the musty areas of Mother Theresa's habit.

LASER TRIPBOMB

Stick it on a wall or other solid flat surface (Va'iga Tuigamala, for example), and two seconds later it will project a laser beam, which, when broken, will blow the shit out of the breaker. This, as you can imagine, causes endless merriment in DukeMatches – as long as you remember which side of the beam you want to go before you set it. Never has Painting-Yourself-Into-A-Corner-Syndrome been so fraught.

DEVASTATOR

What looks at first like the world's coolest pair of gloves is actually a double-barrelled missile launcher. It's a shame the barrels aren't gloves, because we really like the idea of running around with our arms out like that. Nevertheless, it's a fun thing to have when you have to explore the darker, more scary areas – if only because 99 stingers going off creates a good deal of light to see by.

FREEZER

What a hoot (especially in DukeMatches). Fires molecular discharges which freeze your fleeing victim solid, at which point you can stroll after them and boot them, shattering them into a million shards – handy for cocktail evenings when you run out of ice. Its rays bounce off two walls, which introduces an element of snooker into the proceedings, and an interesting new hazard when facing mirrors. Always handy for finding out what you'd look like with blue skin.

puzzles and switches that are more hidden than *Doom's*, and levels that may get you stuck from time to time.

Your character is funny. I won't quote him too much here, because these things always seem more amusing when you are playing rather than in print, but he does say, during an earthquake, "I ain't afraid of no 'quake." And he does sing "Born to be wi-i-i-ild" in a karaoke club.

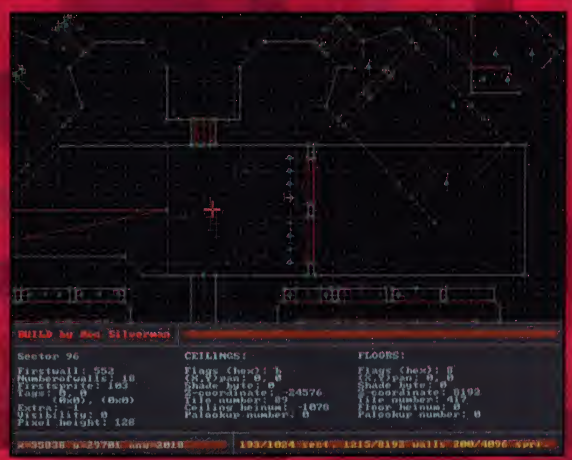
One slight drawback is the mouse aiming system, whereby you can look up and down as you progress, and which had me vomiting copiously after one four-hour session. (A hot Indian dish, if you must know, and yes, it hurt.) About the only thing I can think of more likely to induce nausea is a video of Paul Daniels and Debbie Magee having sex.

New stuff

Then there are the extras – two extra episodes, along with loads of in-game stuff like new weapons, some of which show the aliens obviously have a good sense of humour. Hey, maybe we should

The Levellers

The level editor that comes with *Duke* is the very one that the designers use themselves, and allows you to edit everything that's in the game apart from the code that runs the game engine itself. It comes complete with a warning that if you cock up your copy of *Duke* using it, you're on your own, and that they won't offer any help with its use. Scary. Like *Doom*, you can sit down and design yourself an evil arena in plan view, but you can also go into the area you've just designed and work on it in 3D from within the level itself, making it much easier to realise that the level you've just made based on the exploration of a giant Pamela Anderson has genitals of the wrong sex and breasts that are too realistic.



just buy them a couple of beers and have a laugh together... but I suppose that might not make such a good game. There are the new enemies: the chaingun-carrying Enforcer; the airborne, mechanised death-dealing Sentry Drone; the rocket-firing, gravity-defying Assault Commander and the Protozoid Slimer, which runs up your trouser leg and sucks your brains out (something many people would pay good money for).

There are evil bastards who are very hard to get rid of, like the Battle Lord, a huge lumbering bastard with no weaknesses, who shoots rapid fire artillery and mortar shells at you and can only be killed by repeated attacks; the Overlord, who launches powerful rocket attacks from a surgically implanted launcher on its back (in episode 2); and the extremely scary Cycloid Emperor, who appears in episode 3. Plus there's the level designer, and the facility to convert any *Doom* WAD into a *Duke* map.

Walk into our office at the moment and you'll see everyone playing one of two games, and other people standing behind watching. One is (still) *Championship Manager 2* – and this is the other.

When it comes down to it, you could be a techno-snob and ignore this and wait for *Quake* to appear – or you could buy this and have a good time in the interim. It's easy for reviewers to suggest multiple purchases in situations like this, forgetting that everyone else has to pay for their games. But in this case, I honestly think *Duke* is more than value for money. It's more inventive, and more entertaining, than *Doom*. I know they've had long enough to get it right (but so have many others, who've tried and failed), and I know that with *Quake* about to hit us, things have moved on in the meantime. Someone in the office said that this looks like a cartoon, and *Quake* looks real. This is also true, but that doesn't mean that this isn't a great game in its own right. We like it a lot. If Apogee don't make much money on it, they'll only have themselves to blame. They've timed its release really badly: it should have been out six months ago. But it's still good. **Z**

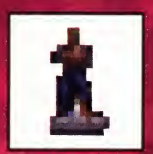
Inventory items

No peril-packed foray into the world of psychotic alien bastards would be complete without a range of what's known technically as "stuff" to take with you and/or find dotted about in unlikely locations.

MEDIKIT
Guess what this does? (Answers on a postcard to Medikit Competition at the usual address.)

STEROIDS
Make you run faster and jump higher than Ben Johnson (the Canadian sprinter, not the long-dead playwright, who apparently wasn't especially nippy) and give you a kick like a mule (the half-horse, half-donkey thing, not the fashionable footwear item).

HOLODUKE
Hologram of you, used to fool dimmer enemies into thinking you're standing motionless, waiting for them to kill you, when in fact you're hiding nearby with a grenade and a nasty smile.



JETPACK
Ideal for hovering about in mid-air, singing the theme from whichever James Bond film had them in (where's Jeremy when you need him?) until some bastard shoots you up the arse (feck! girls! etc).

NIGHT VISION GOGGLES
You might suppose that these would be ideal for poking about in dark places at night (insert dubious sexual practice of your own here), but in fact their purpose seems to be to turn everything green but equally difficult to see.

SCUBA GEAR
Always handy for fetish parties, but essential for underwater frolics with consenting marine life.

PROTECTIVE BOOTS
Allow you to stroll about calmly in green radioactive slime. Also stop rough boys picking on you in shopping centres on Saturday afternoons.

As well as the above, which can be picked up and carried about with you for use when necessary, there are things which affect you immediately, like healing atoms which add 50 points to your health, body armour (which also slows you down) and the traditional coloured keycard things so popular in games of this ilk.

(Top left) I told you to stay away from the window.

(Right) A great big fat bastard (with a rocket launcher).

(Below left) Earth. Ah, the majesty of it all. It makes you think about the incons – *(You've done that one – Ed.)* oh.

Score

93

Fab.

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: 486DX/33

Graphics: VGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick (CH Flightstick, ThrustMaster FCS and Gravis gamepad compatible)

Note: 30Mb hard disk space required

Price: £44.99 **Release date:** Out now
Publisher: US Gold
Tel: 0121-625 3388

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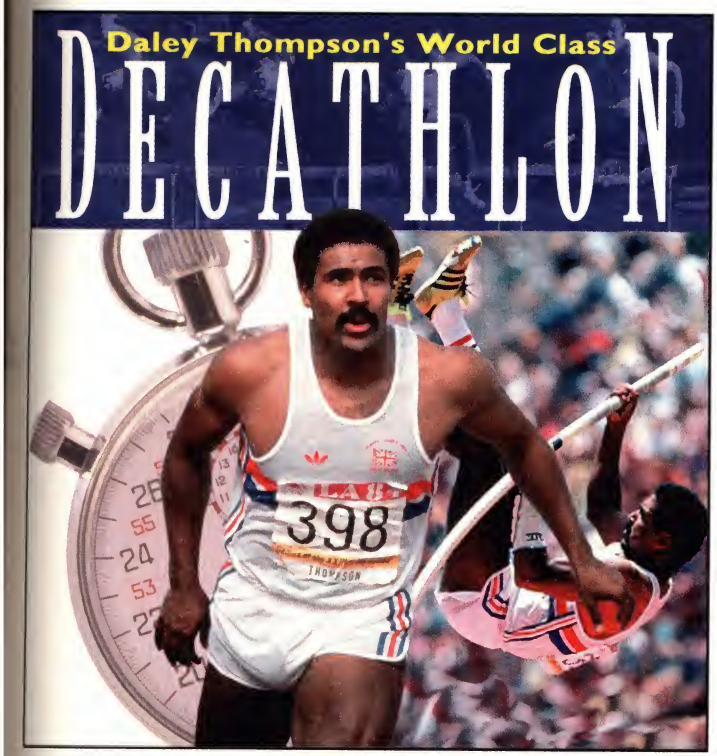

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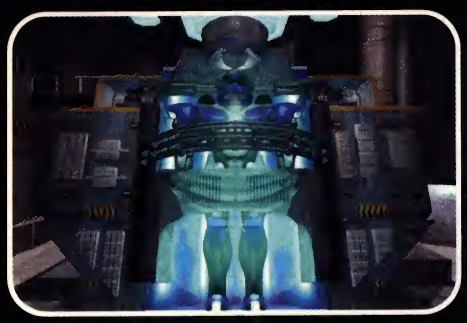

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Silent Hunter

Duncan MacDonald thinks submarine games in general are smart, and goes apeshit over this one in particular. But then he always was a bit of a sad git...

YOU KNOW WHEN YOU'VE BEEN Tango'd... This is a true story: in ww2 there was a Yank sub called the Tang, commanded by a bloke called Dick O'Kane. On his fifth patrol of the Formosa Straits O'Kane spotted a convoy of Jap tankers and freighters which looked like easy meat, requiring only a relatively straightforward surface attack (which should have been clear-cut due to the fact that it was night-time). Seven Jap ships were duly sunk (including two that collided while trying to ram the Tang).

So far so good. O'Kane had only two torpedoes left, so from his position up on the bridge he ordered them loaded; he'd finish off a transport ship damaged earlier, and then head for home. "Fire one!" he cried through his tube doofer. "Fire two!" But what he didn't know was that one of the torpedoes had a dodgy gyro, which made it swing around in a giant circle. The result? The Tang shot itself in the arse. The explosion threw O'Kane into the water, where he could only watch as his tattooed sailor chums headed towards Davy Jones' Locker. Death Central!

The bobbing O'Kane was picked up the next day by a Yank patrol boat and spent a week in hospital (where his every whim was taken care of by a bevy of swooning nurse-groupies). He was eventually awarded the Medal Of Honour for his efforts and given a squillion dollars. Alright for some, eh? *(Hang on a minute... he wasn't given a squillion dollars, and I'm not so sure about the nurse-groupies either – PC Zone Libel Expert.)*

Okay, okay, but what about the game?

Silent Hunter is fab. If you've never played a ww2 submarine game before, let me quickly say here that we're dealing with an under-rated genre which actually deserves as much exposure as the flight sim. In fact I strongly suggest, if you *are* a submarine virgin, that you stick around 'til the end of the page.

Having said that though, if there's a moan to be had in this review, I may as well get it off my chest now. Here we go: *Silent Hunter* could be said to be paying more than just lip-service to the totally brilliant *Aces Of The Deep*. We're talking big-time copycat here. Even the options screens look the same, for Christ's sake. (Mind you, 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' I suppose.) The main differences between *Hunter* and *Aces*, however, are as follows: (a) It's Yanks versus Japs in the Pacific rather than Krauts versus Brits in the Atlantic; (b) There's a greater degree of realism available regarding torpedo launches: you can go crazy-anorak with protractors and trigonometry if you want to; (c) Ditto the deck gun... take complete manual control, and 'guess that angle'. *(You sad bastard Duncan – Ed.)*; (d) You get radar capabilities long before the enemy (and the radar screen is spank-eroony); (e) The graphical approach is sort of, er, 'opposite' to *Aces Of the Deep... Aces* was vector ships and bitmap land, *Silent* is the other way round.

(Top left) With a bevy of nurse-groupies behind him Captain MacDonald checks the periscope.

(Above) Take aim: fire!

The gameplay...

Rather than boringly list everything you get to do (I'd need three more pages anyway), I'll just say that playing *Silent Hunter* is pretty much exactly the same as watching one of those numerous brill Sunday afternoon blob-out ww2 submarine movies starring John Mills and co – except you're not just watching, you're doing. You couldn't ask for more, really. Superlative atmosphere, graphics to match, lots of cat and mouse stuff, explosions, big splashes, creaking hulls, depth charge attacks, leaking engine rooms, the works. Excellent! And the interface is smart.

C'mon, surely something has to be iffy?

The sonar ping noises are a bit crap! Oh, and there aren't proper 'waves' (you do bob up and down, though). And I still think it's high time we had a submarine sim where you can move around inside, *Duke Nukem*-style, whacking panicking crew members with huge spanners. That having been said, though – and, of course, the fact that it's a bit of a rip-off merchant – *Silent Hunter* really is a very difficult game to fault. It does what it sets out to do, and it does it perfectly. What more can one ask? **Z**

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb
Processor: 486DX/66
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Mouse
Note: Double-speed drive CD-ROM required

Score

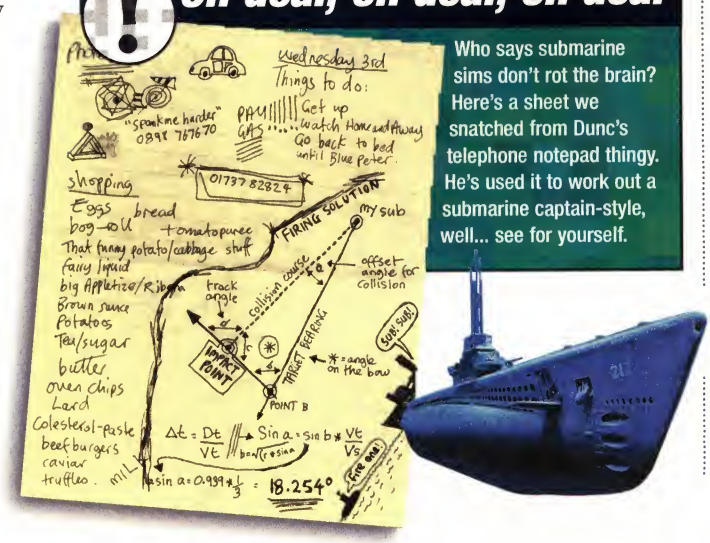
90

If you thought *Das Boot* was excellent, you'll love this.

Price: Tba **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: SSI/Mindscape
Tel: 01444 246333

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

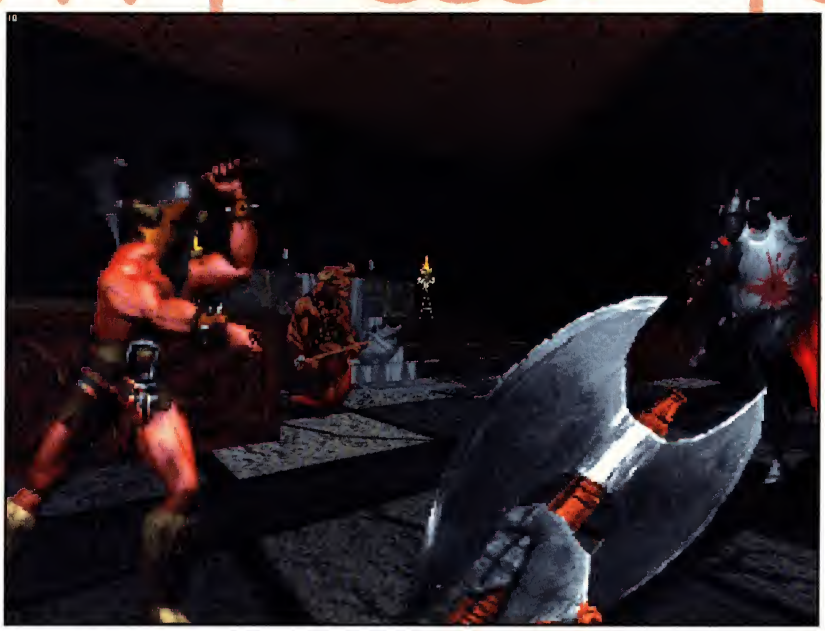
Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear



Who says submarine sims don't rot the brain? Here's a sheet we snatched from Dunc's telephone notepad thingy. He's used it to work out a submarine captain-style, well... see for yourself.

"*Witchaven* was sick, twisted, gory and depraved," said Paul Presley. "Good, you're in the perfect frame of mind for the sequel then," we replied handing over the disks, manual and complimentary sickbag.

Witchaven 2



(Above left) Feel the wrath of my, erm, slightly blunted, somewhat serrated axe. Erm, anyone got a grindstone?

(Above) Fight fire with fire... or water.

(Left) Hey look it's RenderMan.

(Below) 10,000 volts of pure electric energy are running through your enchanted weapon.

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb

Processor: 486DX/66

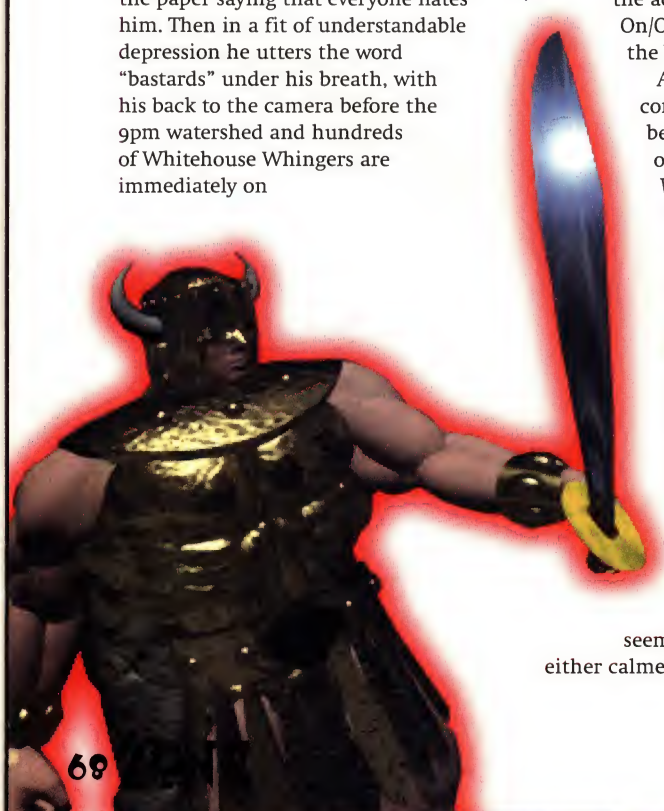
Graphics: VGA/SVGA

Sound: All major sound cards

Controls: Keyboard, mouse, joystick, VR helmet

I GET VERY WORRIED ABOUT THE so-called moral majority sometimes. A character in a popular early-evening television drama serial has his entire family leave him, his house blown up, his illegitimate son arrive on the scene then contract bone cancer and die, his dog get run over by a lorry, and a national poll come out in the paper saying that everyone hates him. Then in a fit of understandable depression he utters the word "bastards" under his breath, with his back to the camera before the 9pm watershed and hundreds of Whitehouse Whingers are immediately on the phone to the TV company telling of their outrage. Meanwhile a game like *Witchaven* – with its blood, guts, gore, decapitation, violence and unjustifiable mutilation – is busy corrupting the minds of our game-playing youth, turning them into dangerous psychopathic monsters, and no one bats an eyelid. That's the advantage of having a 'Gore On/Off' button I suppose. Beats the V-Chip hands down.

Anyway, all this is a rather convoluted way of saying that because it wasn't banned outright, the gore-filled *Witchaven* managed to sell enough to warrant a sequel. And here it is. *Witchaven 2: The Return Of Blood*. Or something.



Gary Gore

This time things aren't nearly as bad on the old Gutsometer. Yes, there is still quite a bit of blood every time you hit someone, but there isn't nearly as much of the surrounding nastiness as there was first time round. Thankfully it seems that the designers have either calmed down a bit or attended numerous counselling sessions ("Hi everyone, my name's Brad. I'm a computer programmer and I'm addicted to innards") because now things are much more in the 'spooky' camp as opposed to the violent one. Obviously *Hexen*'s had something to do with things here, as at first glance the two games are nearly identical.

That's perhaps the biggest problem facing *Witchaven 2* – the fact that since the first game we've had *Heretic*, *Hexen*,

(Left) Good job you've got those asbestos gloves on.

(Below left) You're not the only one with magic weapons though. Here a warrior tries out his pixie dust against your steel.

Azrael's Tear and, of course, the *Quake* demos. We've now seen the 'medieval *Doom*' game from nearly every conceivable angle and because *Witchaven 2* doesn't really introduce anything innovative or clever into the scene, it ends up looking more like an extra levels disk for the first game than a sequel.

Everything's virtually the same, you see. The weapons are all the same, the spells, the potions, the goals for each level. There are some new monsters sure, and the weapons now have an 'enchanted' mode to make them more powerful, but it's all cosmetic icing rather than any serious restructuring of the game's own innards.

There's an indication that the programmers knew this however, as they've included a level editor with the game – an approach usually adopted when the company realise they can't take a game series any further and decide to let the public mess with the program while they work on something new. This is quite good fun in fact, better some might say than the actual game, and is easy to use which always helps. Sometimes these things can be so bloody complicated...

Billy Blood

It's not fair to say that it's crap. It isn't. It's just as much fun as the first game was, the only problem now is that there's strong competition out there. It does everything right as far as quality gaming goes: the graphics are superb, the sound is suitably spooky, the action is fast and hectic, and the atmosphere is spot on – but it doesn't quite do enough to better the rivals.

It is weird, isn't it? I can say pretty much the same things about two games; one leads to a favourable review, the other doesn't. The only difference between them? Well, about half a year. This truly is a fast-moving industry, my friend. And unfortunately *Witchaven 2* is struggling to keep up. **Z**

Score

72

Sick, twisted and violent? Not this time I'm afraid.

Price: £29.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: US Gold
Tel: 0121-625 3388

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

An actual spell

Ever at the forefront of information dispensing, we here at *PC Zone* are proud to be able to take yet another opportunity to corrupt the young and impressionable minds of our readers by giving you a chance to dabble in the occult world of arcane power with an actual real-life, honest-to-goodness, fully-tested magic spell to cast for the amusement of your friends and family. (*Are you sure about this? – Ed.*) Relax, it's harmless. Mostly. The purpose of this spell is to instil a person with a dreadful medical-based curse. You will need:

1 scrap of paper torn from an ancient tome of power (any holy book will suffice)
1 drop of oil taken from the skin of a daemon (Castrol GTX is rumoured to be made from this)
4 Magnesium strips
Half a pint of water
Half a pint of sour milk
3 dead flies
A representation of the target to be cursed (eg a photograph of Garry Bushell etc)
Salt to taste

Onto the scrap of holy paper write the name of an infectious disease. Pour the oil onto the words and spread across the entire paper. Now drop the paper into a bowl containing the water, milk and flies. Mix well and heat slightly (do not boil). Now drop the representation into the bowl, and while chanting the following, drop in one magnesium strip after each line:

Curse ye, curse ye, curse ye.
Desuac egamad rof lebil ton era ew.
Efil a teg esaelp esaelp esaelp.
Curse ye, curse ye, curse ye.

Give it five minutes on the heat, then dispose of quickly. And hey presto if you haven't cast your first spell! Within 24 hours the target of the spell should be infected. (*Will that actually work? – Ed.*) Dunno, but it might stop people listening to Garry Bushell if they think he's cursed. (*Ahh. Very clever – Ed.*)

Some soccer games just look beautiful...

PC CD-ROM & PLAYSTATION

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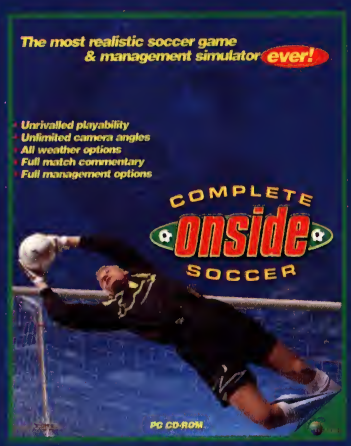

Release Dates

June - PC CD-ROM

July - PLAYSTATION

Available from all good stores.

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Tel: 01932 222 232 **Fax:** 01932 252 702
Email: 100622.3702@compuserve.com
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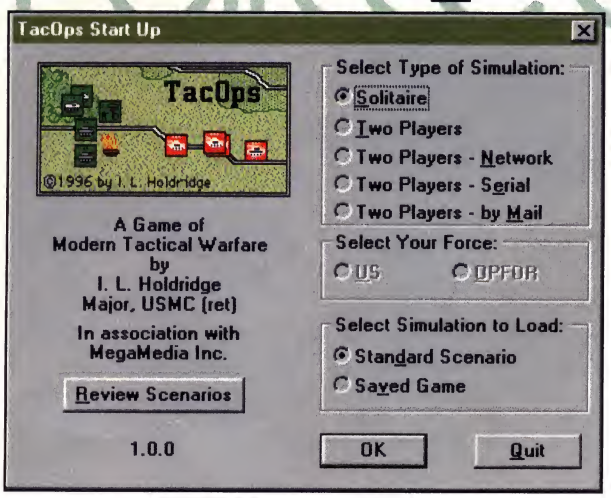
...only one really lets you play!

TELSTAR Electronic Studios

Tenshun! *TacOps* is here and Andrew Wright's needed no persuading to have a go. Now, let's get out there and kick some commie ass. Sorry, OpFor ass...

TacOps



TACOPS CLAIMS TO BE A SIMULATION of contemporary and near-future tactical ground combat between the good guys (the US) and the bad guys (the OpFor, an abbreviation of Opposing Forces). The odd thing is, there isn't a hex in sight.

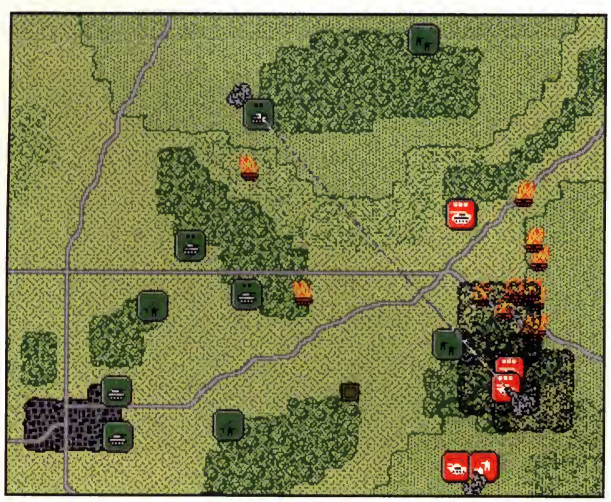
That's right – no hexes at all. Units are placed directly on the map and the program works out the actual range to the enemy units and whether or not it can see or be seen. You move your units – whether they're individual vehicles or platoons of vehicles – using waypoints. Just a simple press of the 'go' button and all the orders are carried out simultaneously; in fact each turn takes a minute and is broken down into four 15 second pulses, although in effect once you've given your men their orders they're on their own.

(Above) Plenty of options there.

(Above right) The order box looks complicated but it's easy when you know how. Like driving an M1 battle tank, I dare say.

(Below) You can almost smell the smoke in that valley...

(Below right) The photo database is handy for ham-fisted amateurs. So that's what an HMMWV is...



If the words 'real-time' are a major turn off, you've nothing to fear – you can take your time dishing out your orders. Each unit has limited artificial intelligence in that it will fire back if fired upon, as well as shooting targets it spots and thinks it can damage, at any opportunity. However, you can tweak the way they will react to some situations, using the game's highly original ordering system.

Each unit has its own standard operating procedure (SOP), but you can change that as often as you like. For example, you might want a lone scout to pop smoke and reverse a certain distance when it's fired on. Likewise, if it catches sight of something and fires its weapon you can tell it to stop, preventing it from blundering any further forward.

The same holds true if you're defending: you can command units not to fire at targets outside a given range. You can also order them to fire only at targets in a certain area or targets of a certain type. All this gives you pretty well unlimited flexibility when you're deciding on tactics.

If this all sounds like wargame heaven, you're getting close. Add network and play by mail/e-mail options, an on-line photographic database, realistic weapon sounds, a 200-odd page user manual and you're closer still.

Tech specs

Memory: 4Mb
Processor: 386
Graphics: VGA
Sound: All Windows compatible sound cards
Controls: Mouse

Unfortunately, there's a catch. *TacOps* isn't much to look at. The unit markers look like cheap cardboard counters, the terrain is green, green or green. and some of the maps you need to play in order to get to grips with the game are incredibly tiny. Even if you play in 640x480 (this is a Windows game, remember), you'll need new contact lenses to place your units properly. And no, you can't zoom in. The designer claims that this is so that you can play the game on an old 386 with just enough RAM to run Windows. Well, it's his game.

In many ways *TacOps* is more of a sim than a game – there are no morale rules, for instance, and your men will fight to the last man – but as far as simulations go, it has few equals. Indeed, if you're into modern armoured combat, I'd say that *TacOps* is a must-have. Great game, plenty of excitement, endless tactical possibilities. Shame about the graphics but hey, that's war... **Z**

Score

81

Look, no hexes! A cool, near real-time wargame.

Price: £44.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: Strategic Plus Software
Tel: 0181-977 8088

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

Guaranteed to melt away the miseries of mediocre games. . . FAST!

"more challenging, more interesting and more feature filled than its illustrious predecessor" PC ZONE, April 1996.
"a must for fans of the original and gamers who like God sims" PC Power, April 1996.
"Corking product" Gamepro, May 1996.
"Guaranteed to keep you locked away for hours" CD Powerplay, April 1996.
"a sequel that is set to take the world by storm" PC Home, April 1996.

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Battle Arena Toshinden

(Left) Mondo spins his big stick round very fast, beating Ellis repeatedly in the head

(Above) Sofia over-compensates for the weight of her chest and ends up falling over backwards.

Patrick McCarthy often entertains close friends by shooting fireballs from various bodily orifices. Except on Holy Days, when he opts for ping-pong balls instead.

It's SLAP 'EM UP TIME. TOSHINDEN'S premise is the usual one of the world's greatest martial artists gathering together in secret to see who's the hardest – except it's not that much of a secret or we wouldn't be watching. There are all the usual ways to play – traditional arcade style one-against-the-world; a practice mode; and options for two-player action on one machine or over a network. There are five levels of difficulty, plus ways to further customise a game – relative strengths can be adjusted in two-player games and you can even switch an auto-defence mode on.

PlayStation game alert

It looks nice enough, among pretty backgrounds in small playing areas set on high, which are easy to fall off of. But you should bear in mind that it's slightly jerky at its maximum 640x400 definition on a P90, with 16MB RAM, and still not smooth at 320x200. You can adjust detail settings to smooth things out, but given that part of the game's appeal lies with its graphics, this isn't a satisfactory solution. Buying a P133 just to play it also seems a tad excessive.

There are the usual control problems of all PSX-to-PC conversions – after all, going from an eight-button controller to one with considerably fewer is never ideal. In practice, it works reasonably well with a six-button pad or a keyboard, but a two-button joystick is a non-starter and of course, even using keyboard controls makes some of the fireball facilities difficult to activate.

Fireballs?

Yup. Firstly, *Toshinden* differs from most beat 'em ups in that it's more of a sword and sorcery special effects movie: these 'unarmed' combatants seem to carry an awful lot of pointy weaponry around with them, ranging from gigantic two-handed swords, to a couple of titchy knives. It's also jammed to bursting with special moves, including rapid-fire hits, a huge range of combos, and the ability to leap small buildings in a single bound – when you jump in *Toshinden*, you come down with snow

(Below left) Our heroes gesture and gesticulate, but don't actually go anywhere near each other.

(Below) Er... not quite sure what's going on here actually.

(Above) Quick! Nick his wallet.

(Above right) Ellis leans gently over to her left and lets fly the world's worst girly fart... silent, deadly and unexpected.

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb
Processor: 486DX2/66
Graphics: SVGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Keyboard, joystick, joypad

on your shoulders (despite that anti-dandruff shampoo you paid so much cash for). Combine all this with the aforementioned fireballs, and you have fights that stop being fights pretty quickly, and become something more akin to ooh... let's see... a Royal Ballet production of the Gulf War.

I want a real fight!

At first, this is all very spectacular and impressive, but after a while you long for a bit of simple hand-to-hand violence, instead of people stabbing each other with 70-foot pikes and shooting exocet missiles from their arse. It's a bit too easy to hit people from miles away and the fireballs are relatively easy to set off, and a bit too effective. This might be just fine and dandy as far as you're concerned, but really they might just as well carry guns and be done with it.

This is true to the original game, of course, but it still leaves something to be desired as a beat 'em up. If they'd just left it as a no-frills sword-fighting game, it would have been a lot better.

As far as pure 3D beat 'em ups go, the superior *Virtua Fighter* is already available, and the excellent *Tekken* is on its way from the PlayStation.

One point to bear in mind though, is that both of these need some kind of 3D graphics accelerator card – and the price of one of these marvels of modern technology isn't actually much less than that of a PlayStation. And I suppose that while we're banging on about the PSX, it's also worth mentioning that far superior sequels have already been released for all three games. It makes you think, doesn't it? Z

Score

83

A pretty good conversion of a pretty good game. But check the recommended hardware specs.

Price: £34.99 **Release Date:** Out now
Publisher: FunSoft
Tel: 0181-748 5656

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

The characters

There are the usual range of hunks, along with two female caricatures for younger gameplayers to fiddle with themselves in front of. Each character has two outfits – presumably one's for everyday fights to the death and the other's for more formal occasions.

1. EIJI
Cute heroic one who's fighting for charidee (Save The Late Seventies Hairstyle Fund, if you must know). Has a thin poncey sword, thick poncey tights and – crime of crimes – a headband and back-combed hair. But boy, when he gets in his GTi, can he pull the *chicks*.

2. ELLIS
Pocket sex-pot, for onanists who like their women small and unthreatening. Fights in a see-through bridesmaid's dress, so that her opponent will be put off by sight of her big pants. Worryingly for male foes, her weapon of choice is a set of circumcision knives.

3. KAYIN
Archetypal good-looking hero (and therefore, like Cary Grant, James Dean and Russell Grant, probably gay). Insists on shouting "Deadly ray!" at you when he fires his... well, deadly ray. Which has all sorts of potential for embarrassment when he misses, or you don't die.

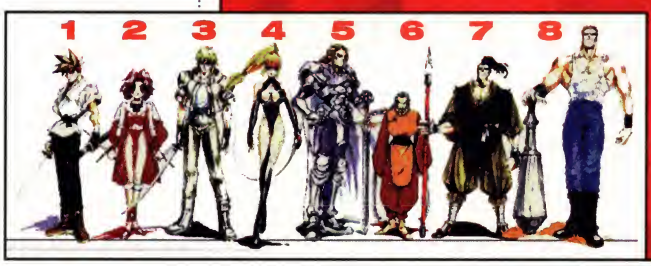
4. SOFIA
Notorious beachball smuggler and official record-holder of World's Narrowest Bikini-line (0.35mm). Fights in black leather; can write her name in the snow with that whip. Alternative outfit seems to be a green suede tiger-stripe number, which some people quite like.

5. DUKE
Armour-clad muscle-bound fantasy figure, with a sword the size of a drill-bit from a North Sea oil-rig. Has a neat line in leaping into the air and landing on you sword-first and – get this, girls – size 15 shoes. Has never used Sun-In in his life. Or a condom, for that matter.

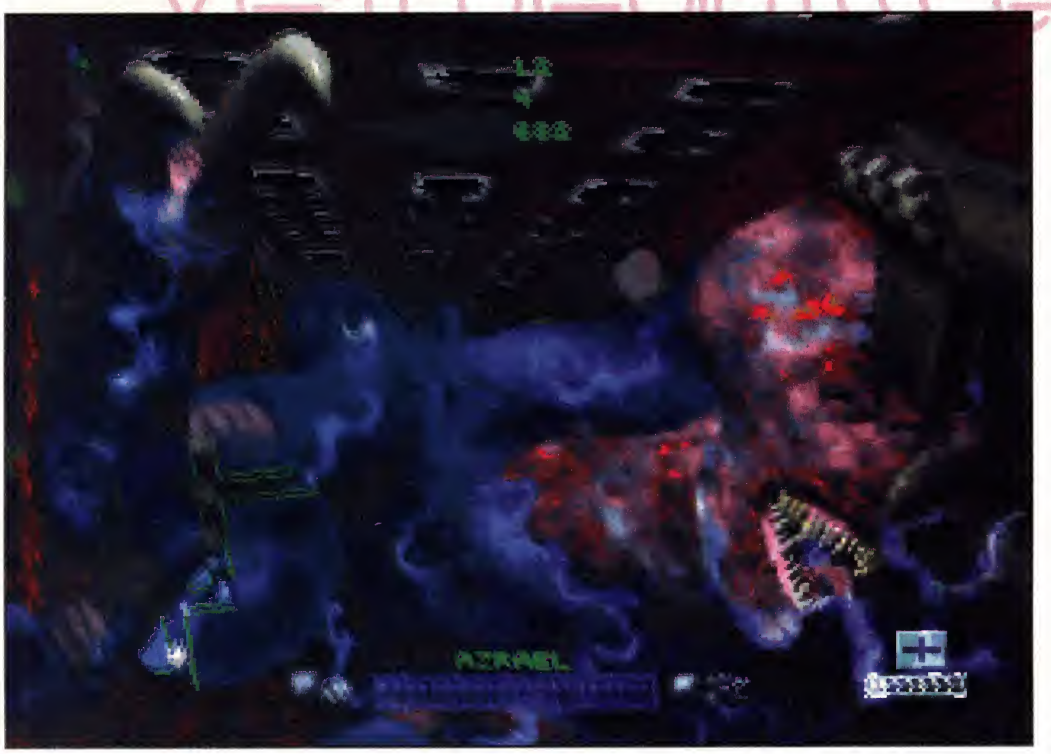
6. FO
Perhaps because he looks like a gardener out of a PG Wodehouse novel, Fo insists on fighting with a three-foot long rake strapped to each wrist. But don't fall for his ploy of hopping about on one leg as if his bunions are playing him up; it's a trick. Old bastard.

7. MONDO
Mondo has an enormous pole. (Just ask anyone who's showered with him after the match – © J Clary, 1991.) It's a 50 foot pike, with which he picks you up from the other side of the screen and waves you about like he's drying tea towels. This is very humiliating.

8. RUNGO
In a world where subtle moves are all, Rungo carries a club the size of a hippo's thorax and has the IQ of a prawn. His views on life? "Rungo like *meat*. Rungo *big boy now*. Rungo *hit*. Rungo shout 'Schmuckleberry shoitt-shtawin!' sometimes... But... not know why..."



Space Hulk: Vengeance Of The Blood



(above) These guns were made for clonking. And that's just what they do.

We stressed the importance of intros in computer game reviews to Khris Ahnderssen before he started writing *Space Hulk*. He breezily replied, "intro, schmintro". So we deliberately spelt his name wrong. Hah.

Pentium alert

To run *Space Hulk* in its impressive hi-res mode, you're going to need at the very least a Pentium 100. Running the game at its normal resolution looks okay, but the graphics in this mode pale in comparison to those offered up by the phenomenal 3DO version. This is not as much a blow to 486 owners as it may sound. With this type of game, it's playability that counts above anything else, and *Space Hulk* delivers this big-time. However, if you *have* got a 486 or a low-end Pentium, and gloss means more to you than substance, consider yourself warned.

(Right) This is a picture of two people. Shooting things. With their guns. (*Well done, Chris – Ed.*)

(Far right) Here's a room I completely messed up with my flamer.

LET'S BE HONEST ABOUT THIS. I knew what I was dealing with even before I sat down and loaded this game up. I played the original PC version of *Space Hulk* to death, decided it was something pretty special indeed, and had only recently revisited this game of games in its 3DO incarnation. Well quelle surprise, the 3DO version is even better than the PC original. It features a selection of the best missions the PC version had to offer, and has an entirely new campaign to boot. And to top it all off, the graphics are absolutely gorgeous.

The Windows 95 version (ie the one under review here) is basically a straight conversion of *Space Hulk* 3DO. It's identical in every way, but with a few exceptions, naturally (more on those later). So what you'll get for your money is basically more levels of the original *Space Hulk* game, with maybe a few graphical improvements, right? Well, not entirely. There's more to this version of EA's classic strategic blood-fest than initially meets the eye. Before we delve deeper into that however, it might be an idea to bring those who have yet to be converted to the *Space Hulk* cause up to date.

In perspective

There aren't really any other games that you could stand against *Space Hulk* for comparison, apart from the other versions of the same game. Suffice to say, the 3DO version is better than the original one for the PC, and the Windows 95 version is, well, almost as good as the 3DO (providing you've got a P100 or better to run it in hi-res).

Space Hulk

Space Hulk W95

Space Hulk 3DO

Space who?

For those of you who aren't familiar with the game, it's basically a first-person perspective shoot 'em up with incredibly clever strategic elements. When it was first released it wowed game reviewers across the land. It wowed the public too, who promptly rushed out and coughed up their readies for it. Indeed, it's still widely regarded as an all-time 'strategy classic'. There are many reasons why the videogame world has elevated the game to cult status. For starters, the game's designers have managed to surpass the achievements of anyone else since *Midwinter* arrived on the PC many moons ago; they created an action-based

Angels

strategy game dripping with a tense, foreboding atmosphere without resorting to the ploy of dropping in highly unconvincing spooky noises at key moments. Your role in the game is that of an incredibly tough space marine whose job it is to board lots of different 'hulks' (empty spaceship bits, basically) and rid the world of nasty alien monsties called genestealers.

The game is played out over a series of missions. At the beginning of each mission you are given a briefing by your boss who keeps referring to you as 'brother', even though by no stretch of the imagination are you related to him. Your objectives vary from killing genestealers and performing mundane tasks like closing doors and finding relics, to performing aforementioned mundane tasks and er, bumping off more genestealers. The more embroiled in the game you get, the more interesting it becomes, as later on you find yourself in command of your fellow space marines, and it's up to you to bark out orders during the missions. What all this stuff adds up to is one absolutely top game that has kept me quiet for a good month or two (*Hoorah!* – *Ed*). This new version follows an identical gameplay format to the original except, well, it's more difficult. Much more difficult in fact...

Come on if you think you're hard enough...

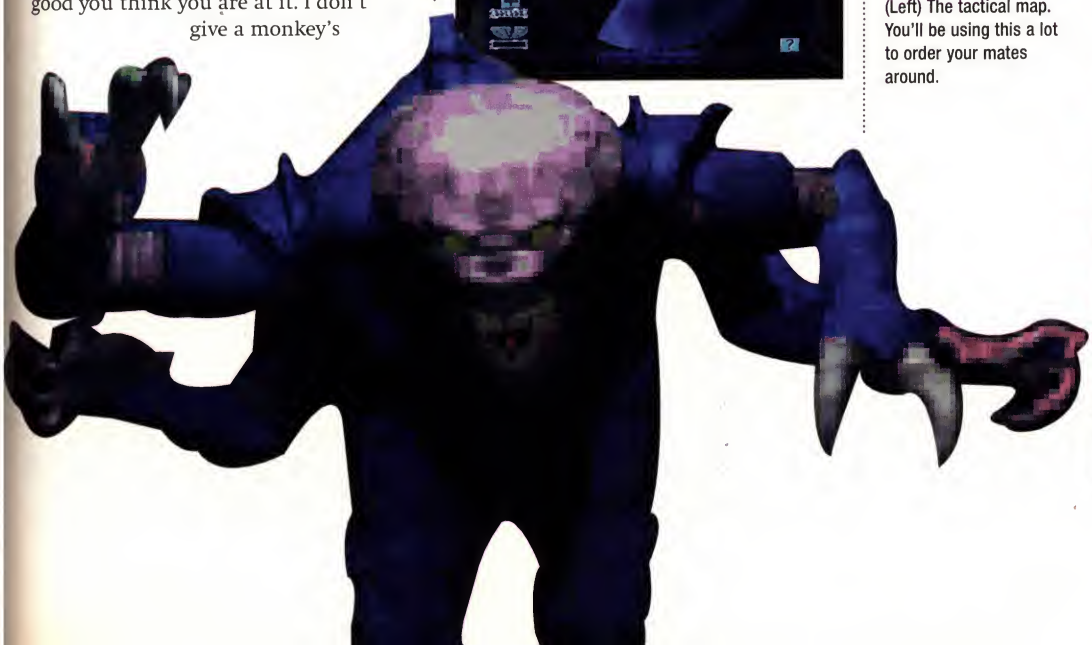
All *Space Hulk* 'experts' heed my words: I don't care how often you played the original *Space Hulk*. I don't care how good you think you are at it. I don't give a monkey's tit either how hard you think you are – this game will cut you straight down to size about an hour into the new campaign. The genestealers are much tougher, and the bastards move around the place at the speed of light. Gone are the days of leisurely sorting out your mission objectives before kicking genestealer butt. If you don't take this lot out quickly, the last things you'll need to worry about are your mission objectives. Consequently, the further you get into the game, the more you'll find yourself replaying missions before completing them successfully. This means you'll have to give a lot more careful thought to your strategies before you embark on a mission, rather than just wading into the genestealers with all guns blazing, a tactic that often paid off in the original game.

I reckon the new difficulty level is a brilliant idea. It makes the strategy side even more crucial to success than ever before. Newcomers to the game will undoubtedly find it a bit daunting, but they can always go through the training levels and extra missions so that they can learn the ropes before taking on the big boys at campaign level. If you're up for a challenge, this is the game for you. **Z**

(Top) Aarrgh, help, go away, piss off etc.

(Above) Squeamish? Faint at the sight of blood? Er, I think you might be playing the wrong game here.

(Left) The tactical map. You'll be using this a lot to order your mates around.



Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb
Processor: 486
Graphics: VGA/SVGA
Sound: Windows compatible sound cards
Controls: Keyboard, joystick, mouse

Score

90

Brilliant strategy game that offers a long-term challenge to those brave enough to accept it.

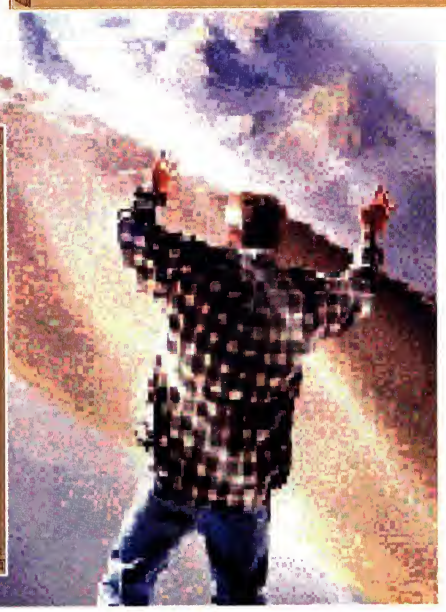
Price: £49.99 **Release date:** Out now
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Tel: 01753 549442

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

Afterlife

PC ZONE RECOMMENDED

Remember, only forgive them if they ask nicely.



Paul Presley has threatened suicide four times this week, despite our pleas for him to at least finish this review first. He seems to have his heart set on it. Bless him.

OKAY, LET'S FACE IT. GOD GAMES HAVE to work really hard to actually be bad. Name me any one god game that wasn't any good. (*Sim Tower* – Ed.) You see, you can't. (*Sim Ant* – Ed.) Everything from *Sim City* to *Civilization* to *Theme Hospital*, they're all great. (*Sim Farm* – Ed.) So *Afterlife*, LucasArt's new quite literal 'god' game is entering the world's safest game genre, so everything should be a-okay. Or should it?

(Above right) As if you hadn't already guessed, Heaven is the one above the planet, Hell the one below. You're in charge of both mind you, so it's twice the challenge.

(Above left) The two trees contain a Karma portal, one of the necessary ingredients for soul reincarnation.

You see, the theory that all god games are wonderful is fundamentally flawed. They're great for the first five hours; after that you tend to have seen pretty much everything the game has to offer and all that's left is the challenge of playing the thing effectively. That's fine for the basic models (*Sim City*, *Civilization* etc) where the initial concept was on balancing the strategy element of the game effectively, but for the, shall we say, 'concept' god games (*Sim Ant*, *Theme Park*, *Sim Tower* etc) this tends to leave them wanting as the novelty factor wears off. I return to the original *Sim City* every now and then, but I haven't played *Theme Park* since December 1994. *Afterlife* is a 'concept' god sim.

Soul food

But *Afterlife* is a 'concept' god sim that sticks true to the original concept of *Sim City* and manages to keep something alive within it (no pun intended) well after the novelty factor has worn off. It's also the first god game in which you actually do play god, or close enough. The idea is that you are in charge of developing both Heaven (ahh-ahh-ah) and Hell (crackle, singe), making sure that all the lost souls that enter your pearly gates find either the spiritual reward of the virtuous or the eternal punishment of the damned. You do this by 'zoning' areas of your afterlife according to needs.

For example, a soul is wandering around Heaven looking for a reward based on his honest life. You therefore need to zone (in much the same way you'd zone commercial, residential or industrial areas in *Sim City*) an honest area for him to enter and set up residence. Conversely, if he's wandering around Hell after having led a life of lust, you'll need to give him somewhere warm down below. Zoning costs money of course, or in this case, Pennies From Heaven, which is gained from each soul you save. Fail to give a soul a home and you'll lose both him and some cash.

What's particularly nice is the way that each zoned area develops over time. Just as in *Sim City*, in which small houses would grow, followed by larger complexes then huge skyscrapers, here we see small scale 'generic' rewards and various punishments (such as gardens of eternal loveliness or monsters constantly nibbling on regenerating limbs for all eternity) that grow in size and scale as your afterlife gets bigger.

All sounds familiar

It all works in a very similar way to *Sim City*. Your citizens/souls have needs, and it's up to you to attend to them. What sets it apart from the Maxis classic is the fact that you have to spend much more time dealing with the individual souls, rather than just accommodating general trends. Each soul has a time limit on their punishment/reward before they vanish. You can adjust different areas to allow for more permanent residents (or go in the other direction and start shipping souls through at speed) but as more souls start arriving, you'll need to start building more areas, all of which costs money. The alternative is to set up reincarnation posts and start sending people back, but again it's all about ensuring that each soul reaps their full reward/serves their full damnation, before you send them packing. If not, you lose money.

That's where the challenge lies: man (or rather soul) management. *Afterlife* has all the elements that made *Sim City* so good, plus the personal touch (not to mention LucasArts' high-quality polish) – there's enough to keep you hooked long after the 'concept' dies away.

The other thing that makes *Afterlife* so entertaining is the humour. Each of the punishments/rewards has a description that would put the best observational comedian to shame. Your advisors (good and bad angels on your shoulders, as it were) have a high level of banter on offer, and there are jokes stuffed in at every opportunity. They're all supplemental to the actual game (you don't *need* to read the descriptions) but when you find them they make you laugh. And that's what's important in comedy. (*Duh, we know that – Ed.*)

But at the end of the day, *Afterlife* is really *Sim City Plus* with different scenery. Ardent players of the granddaddy of god games aren't going to find much that's different and so should perhaps knock a bit off the final score. However, if you're looking for something that says to the genre, "Look, you can have all the fancy themes and ideas you like. *Sim City* is still the most playable game of its type so that's going to be our basic model", then *Afterlife* is your man. It manages to improve upon the basic game without remoulding it into something else entirely that loses playability in the process. I can see myself still returning to *Afterlife* in four or five years' time. Which is surely the best thing you can say about such a game. **Z**

Hell's punishments

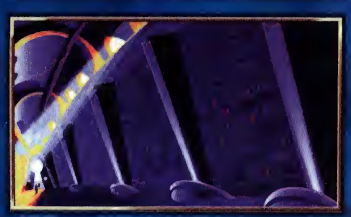
Just some of the things to fear when you reach the nether regions...

(Left) As a giant nose (just one of the game's many disasters) starts sniffing up everything in sight, Aria and Jasper – your eternal aides – offer some less than useful advice.

(Below) The SoulView mode allows you to see exactly who's in for what and how long they have to go. I know they don't look human, presumably LucasArts didn't want to offend religious types.

Heaven's delights

Just some of the things to look forward to when you reach the pearly gates...



Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb
Processor: 486DX/66
Graphics: VGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Mouse

Score

88

Things to do in *Sim City* when you're dead, basically.

Price: £44.99 **Release date:** July
Publisher: Virgin/LucasArts
Tel: 01171-368 2255

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

Anyone who had a wind-up drumming monkey as a kid will understand Rob Tribe's reaction to *Gearheads*. Those who only had a remote control car however, should look up the word clockwork before proceeding.

PC ZONE CLASSIC

Gearheads

Tech specs

Memory: 8Mb
Processor: 486DX/33
Graphics: VGA
Sound: All major sound cards
Controls: Keyboard
Note: Requires Windows 3.1 or higher

Score

90

Wind 'em up and let 'em roll.

Price: £29.99 **Release Date:** mid-June
Publisher: Philips Media
Tel: 0171-911 3000

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

FOR A YOUNG(ISH) HIPPY PERSONAGE such as myself, the title *Gearheads* conjured up notions of a bunch of ZZTop lookalikes whose bong was ready to roll if only they had something to put in it. I assumed that the mission would be to guide these heads on a psychedelic trip through time and space in search of God, who not only deals out justice come judgement day, but also does a nice sideline in Northern Lights. Needless to say, I was wrong, and I can't even claim that my idea is better, because after playing *Gearheads* it's plain that it isn't.

No, this game is about wind-up toys and their constant battle to cross from one side of the screen to the other. In their way however stands other clockwork characters who have made it their mission to get to the opposite side of the screen – and the only thing blocking their path is you. In fact it's somewhat reminiscent of a game of toy tennis which, as any adolescent will tell you, is great fun – especially if you use the head of your kid sister's Barbie.

At first glance, *Gearheads* promises to be just as mind-numblingly mundane as it sounds, but once you've been slaughtered by the computer for the Nth time, the realisation starts to kick in that life in toytown ain't that easy, and that what's needed here are some toy-oriented tactics.

(Above) The battlefield is already littered with the dead – now you have to despatch the chickens.

(Right) Decisions, decisions... choose from one of these twelve lovable rogues.

(Below right) The kitchen, where all good toy wars start.

(Below far right) Proof that Santa Claus uses teleportation to get around during the Christmas period.

Canny cockroaches and kick-boxing kangas

Gameplay commences with four toys in your toybox: a Ziggy (cockroach), Big Al (a JCB), Handy (err, a hand) and Kangaruffian (a boxing marsupial). Your opponent (either the computer or a mate) also has a box of toys, some of which are the same as yours. From now on in it's a case of pitting your wits against chips as you decide which toys to wind up and release, and when. This is actually more important than you might think, because unlike the Duracell bunny, these things can run out of juice – and that's the last thing you need when they're in the middle of the playing area, unless of course your plan of action is to deliberately create a diversion so that you can scuttle ten Ziggys across the winning line. Tactics, you see. Once you've won a few rounds, you then get a crew of different toys – and the war of tactics begins all over again.

After just a couple of hours play you'll suddenly find that *Gearheads* is not only totally brilliant, but also utterly addictive: the only problem is trying to explain this to anyone who hasn't played it. It neatly combines the planning skills of *Tetris* with a sixth sense for the unexpected and has loads of options to keep you entertained for days, such as different playing areas, numerous wind-up toys and bizarre power-ups. But a word of warning: after a few rounds of losing, it won't be just the toys who are getting wound up. Z

The toys we would like to see

Take That – the loveable rogues who almost get to the other side, only to then disappear up their own backsides at the last minute.

Conservatives – they never get anywhere because they insist on making u-turns every few seconds.

ZZTop lookalike – gets halfway across, puts on some Zappa, sparks up a joint and has a party in the middle of the playing area. All the cool toys are invited, but if the squares can't dig the scene they can darn well find their own entertainment.

PICK N MIX

Misshapes, mistakes, misfits... raised on a diet of code and RISC chips. These are the games that can claim no friends. These are the games that get roundly ignored by the public at large. These are the new releases that Charlie Brooker takes under his wing every month. He sits them down and listens to their stories. He holds their hands as they pour their hearts out through floods of sorrowful tears. And then, in a hundred words or less, he takes the piss out of each of them. Because that's what he's like. He's cruel, he's mean, but sorry, he was all we could find.

ANGEL DEVOID

Publisher: Electric Dreams/Mindscape
Tel: 01444 246333
Price: £29.99

SCORE: 44%

At times I can't help but feel that the world would be a far better place if somebody dropped a bloody great nuclear bomb on the USA. Why? Well, apart from anything it would make great TV. *Angel Devoid* is yet another flashy 'interactive movie' from our Yankee chums. You play an earnest cop on the tail of an arch criminal (the Angel Devoid of the title). Following a nasty high-speed hovercar pile-up (lovingly reproduced in a butt-clenchingly tedious intro), you awaken in hospital only to discover that your face has been plastic surgery-ised into – gasp! – an exact likeness of the very man you're chasing. Too much faffing about with FMV, porn movie quality acting, and a script that sounds like it was written by a 13 year old pubescent, consign this game to the digital dustbin of history.

BERMUDA SYNDROME

Publisher: BMG Interactive
Tel: 0171-384 7500
Price: £TBC
Note: Windows 95 required

SCORE: 68%

Bermuda Syndrome is a kind of 'Flashback For Windows'. It all kicks off with a sprightly intro sequence in which Jack Thompson (a most inspiring name for a hero, I'm sure you'll all agree) accidentally pilots his Lancaster bomber through some kind of time-space wormhole and ends up crash-landing in the prehistoric era. What follows is a relatively entertaining combination of *Prince Of Persia*-style platform shenanigans, adventure game object-collecting, and topless cavegirls. It's not too bad as an occasional diversion while you're writing that 18,000 word thesis on the cultural significance of body-popping, but it's hardly satisfaction guaranteed for a full evening's escapism. Nice visuals, mind... but for once can we please have a main hero who isn't an obnoxious little prick? (And the less said about Mr Thompson here the better.)

(Left) *Angel Devoid:* Yip. Devoid of any entertainment value whatsoever.

(Below) *The Dame Was Loaded:* It's just P.I. in the sky.

(Below left) *Bermuda Syndrome:* Who says there's no room for cunnilingus gags in the platform game genre?

THE DAME WAS LOADED

Publisher: Philips Multimedia
Tel: 0171-911 3000
Price: £TBC

SCORE: 55%

It's 'Interactive Movie' time again, boys and girls. *The Dame Was Loaded* casts the player as a hardboiled Private Dick (it's tempting, but we'll resist the inevitable pun here), from the 1940s. Mucho repetitious video footage mingles effortlessly with a droning, insipid voiceover. The majority of the dialogue is a half-arsed attempt at Chandleresque sardonic humour that proves incredibly annoying, and about as amusing as a protracted bout of shingles. *The Dame Was Loaded's* storyline sees our hero winding his way about town, interacting with a seemingly neverending supply of stock cliché characters from the string-vest-sporting bulldog of a landlord to the beautiful but sarky female journo you once had a fling with.

If it's quality Private Eye action you're after, check out *Under A Killing Moon* or its forthcoming sequel as at least they have genuine moments of humour. »

HERETIC: SHADOW OF THE SERPENT RIDERS

Publisher: iD/Raven/GT
Tel: 0171-258 3791
Price: £39.99

SCORE: 50%

Quite frankly, I'm at a loss to explain this one. *Heretic*, the shoddy predecessor to *Hexen*, has returned with a whole new set of levels. Let joy be unconfined. Quite why any of this is at all necessary, since a) *Hexen* is about three thousand times better than *Heretic*, and b) it also has its own new set of stages (see below), is utterly beyond me. Maybe there's someone out there harbouring an ambition to own a personal copy of every single *Doom*-a-like going. If you are that person, then this is for you. And you need to get out more.

HEXEN: DEATH KING

Publisher: iD/Raven/GT
Tel: 0171-258 3791
Price: £14.99

SCORE: 68%

Hexen – the *Doom*-with-a-beard game – has proved relatively popular with both trigger-happy Doomites and RPG saddoes alike. Here we have a new set of well-designed levels which are considerably trickier than the first (which, let's face it, were more than tricky enough). If you've already got the original then there's not enough here to justify a purchase – unless of course you *really really* loved it, or you won the Lottery last week. The rest of us can get our *Doom* fixes elsewhere (ie *Duke Nukem 3D*) or patiently await the arrival of the drool-inducing, spooge-swelling, whisper-its-name-in-awe *Quake*. Mind you, I'd rather play this than that bloody *Heretic* update.

(Above) *Heretic Serpent Riders*: Do try not to get too excited.

(Top right) Well, if it isn't Shane Richie's mum.

(Below left) *Hexen Death King:* Hmmm...

(Below right) *Rise And Rule Of Ancient Empires:* Not quite the end of *Civilization* as we know it.

JUNGLE BOOK

Publisher: IBM Multimedia
Tel: 01753 790700
Price: £TBC
Note: Windows 95 required

SCORE: 70%

Aimed at kiddywinks aged six to nine, *Jungle Book* is a slickly produced video-packed adventure game for Windows. Based on the recent live-action remake of Rudyard Kipling's classic, it features the best gimmick of the month: a voice recognition system. However, rather than offering simple commands to the computer, you instead have to use the microphone provided to speak to a chimpanzee. In chimp language. Never in my life have I felt so ridiculous, but kids will undoubtedly love it. The rest of the game is a piece of piss for anyone over the age of ten, but that goes without saying really. Hardly educational, but it should keep the brats happy for an afternoon or three – and that's got to be worth a few quid of any parent's paycheque.

THE RISE AND RULE OF ANCIENT EMPIRES

Publisher: Sierra On-Line
Tel: 01734 303322
Price: £39.99

SCORE: 60%

Workmanlike *Civilization* clone which supports multi-player empire-building. There's a greater emphasis on the inherent differences between the represented cultures than in Sid Meier's masterpiece, but hey – who really gives a flying one? The overall pace lies somewhere inbetween 'continental drift' and 'fat man dragging himself along pavement using only his lips'. Plenty of thought and effort has gone into the gameplay, and it will probably appeal to those who find themselves sexually aroused by the thought of turn-based chin-stroking. Me, I'd have welcomed a few car chases or something, because as it stands I found it about as much fun as making a comparative study of the prices of rival washing powders.

Budget Games

(cut here for free badge!)

Here we take a quick look at games which are available for those who are shopping on a budget. They're cheaper than normal games. And we tell you whether they're any good or not. Because we care. (Apart from readers who live north of the Euston Road – we don't care whether they live or die, never mind whether they have a quality software experience or not.)

BENEATH A STEEL SKY

Publisher: Virgin
Tel: 0171-368 2255
Price: £12.99

65

The only point-and-click adventure to be famous because a comic artist drew the backgrounds (Dave Gibbons, of the classic *2000AD* and many others). Funny dialogue, nice atmosphere, but the game lacks any real depth.

CHAOS CROSSWORD

Publisher: Ocean
Tel: 0161-832 6633
Price: £4.99

10

A randomly-created crossword puzzle generator might seem like a good idea for buffs who fancy a quick bit of puzzling at lunchtime, and for a fiver you might think you can't go wrong. Unfortunately it took 35 minutes to generate a puzzle on a P133, by which time you could have gone down the newsagents for a quick crossword book and finished three of the damn things.

WESTWOOD STUDIOS 10TH ANNIVERSARY PACK

Publisher: Virgin
Tel: 0171-368 2255
Price: £29.99

86

Westwood have been producing games for exactly (checks watch) ten years, which is the reason for this celebratory anniversary pack. Not that you really need an excuse, as the five games (count 'em) are all still worth having, and are a bit of a barg. First up is the LucasArts-like point and clicker *Legend Of Kyrandia, Book 1*. You control the Artist Formerly Known As the Rightful Prince of Kyrandia; the evil court jester, Malcolm, has nicked the mysterious and powerful Kyragem and disappeared. Not until you capture the pointy-nosed one and recover the afore-mentioned piece of costume jewellry will you restore harmony to the land and start producing solid funk records again.

Once you've done that you can load up *Hand Of Fate* and take the role of Zanthia, the young inexperienced mystic who later had a car named after her and who's prone (being female) to change her outfits between puzzles and even end up starkers from time to time. Not that the games market is aimed exclusively at desperate males, or anything. Anyway, the land of Kyrandia is disappearing in chunks and it's up to her to sort it all out: six separate mini-adventures in six locations; another LucasArts-style romp. Next it's *Kyrandia Book 3*, and for a change you get to play Malcolm, the evil jester from Book 1, who's rampaging about the island bent on revenge. It has good animation and digitised speech, but unfortunately this includes canned laughter at your crap jokes, making the whole thing worryingly like *The Two Ronnies* at times. Some of the puzzles also stretch the credulity somewhat, but again, it's another good effort. Combine those three with flick-screen, maze-based dungeon adventure *Lands Of Lore*, which was highly rated at the time, but looks a little dated these days, and finally *Dune II*, fore-runner to *Command & Conquer*, and still a fine game, and you have one of the better compilations around at the moment.

PERFECT FLIGHT (FLIGHT SIM 5 ADD-ON PACK)

Publisher: Instant Access
Tel: 0181-205 2596
Price: £29.99

90

If you like your flight simulations gun-free and already have a copy of *Flight Sim 5*, get down that quality software emporium immediately. Thirty quid gets you almost... ooh, 1 million pounds' worth of software (approximately), including UK, Scottish Highlands and Iceland scenery enhancements; the Channel Islands, Gibraltar, the Canary Islands and the Azores; 18 new aircraft, from a 757 to a 1914 Avro 504; NAV 1, a flight-plan and navigation program with 1250 airports and 2300 runways from Entebbe to Edinburgh; a book of 'interesting' flights to make and a month's free IBM Global network time. What are you waiting for, dummy? Z

Barg-o-rama

System Shock £11.99
Ultima Underworld in space: big, first-person perspective viewed adventure, with total freedom of movement, loads of weapons and hours of fun/fear.

Alone In The Dark Collection £34.99
All three games for less than the price of the new release, which is virtually the same apart from the graphics. Bloody hard though.

Essential Collections: Flight £34.99
1942 Pacific Air War, *Fleet Defender F14* and *Wings Of Glory*: three decent flight sims for the price of a pint.

Essential Collections: Business £34.99
Transport Tycoon is *Sim City 2000* for the transport industry, and *Theme Park* lets you make children sick. Excellent!

Essential Collections: Sport £34.99
PGA Tour 486 is a superb golf game. *F1 Grand Prix* is the original version of the outstanding racing game. *FIFA Soccer* is okay, too.

Space Hulk £11.99
Gripping strategic gameplay requiring a great tactical mind and a cool head.

Strike Commander £11.99
Refreshingly straightforward arcade-style flight sim with decent graphics and loads of longevity, thanks to the inclusion of the extra missions.

Formula 1 Grand Prix £14.99
Ideal if you want the classic racing game, but don't want the other stuff in the Sport Collection edition.

Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis £12.99
Talkie version of the thoroughbred point-and-click Indy adventure, with three ways to play.

IndyCar Racing £9.99
Definitive, great-looking oval track racing sim, with almost everything the follow-up has, only it's cheaper.

Power, Corruption and Lies £34.99
Worth buying for *UFO* and *Dune 2* alone, it also includes *Fleet Defender F14* and *Beneath A Steel Sky*.

Wing Commander II £11.99
Not as good as *WCIII* and *WCIV*, but then it runs on normal PCs and doesn't need 5GB RAM. Includes the extra missions and speech packs.

Syndicate Plus £11.99
All of the original missions, plus the add-ons, on one CD. Extremely addictive strategic shoot 'em up that gets bloody hard later on.

Privateer £11.99
Wing Commander type space-based dogfighting, with *Elite*-style trading sections. Comes with extras and speech packs.

Sam and Max Hit The Road £12.99
Full talkie version of the benchmark point-and-click adventure, entertaining and puzzling in equal measures. A must-buy.

World Of Combat £29.99
Outstanding compilation: top chopper-sim *Comanche: Armored Fist*, its tank-game equivalent; and gripping sub sim Wolfpack.

VideoLogic GrafixStar 400

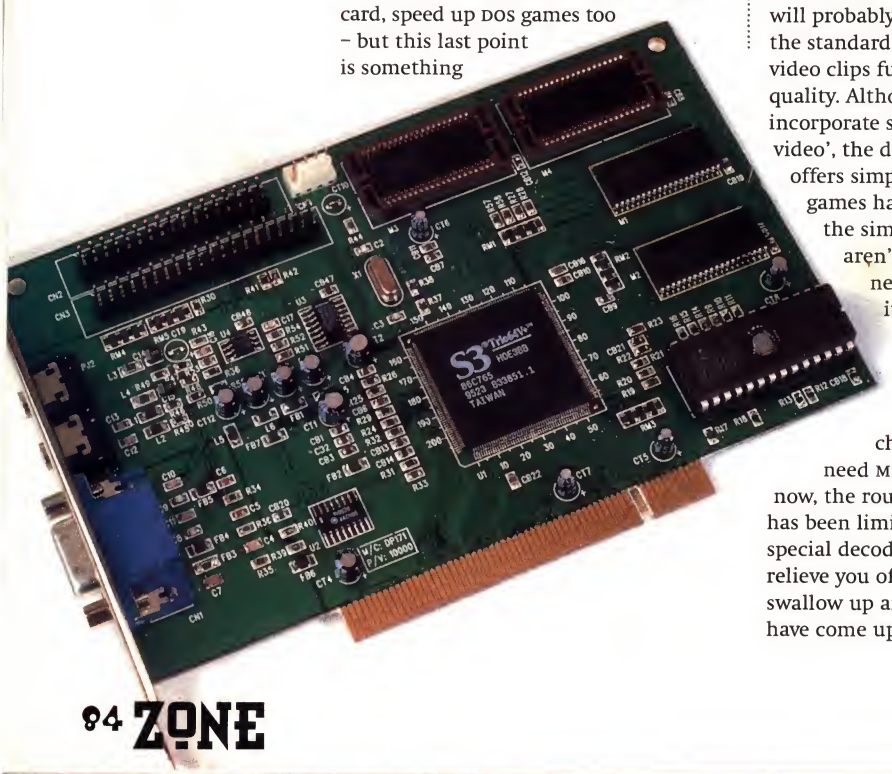
By and large, ordinary graphics cards don't make for a stimulating conversation down the pub, nor are they likely to set your testosterone racing. Dave Mathieson, on the other hand, is pretty excitable so we treated him to the GrafixStar and kept a close eye on his blood pressure.

THE MAJORITY OF USERS, AND GAMES players in particular, will no doubt agree that graphics cards are pretty dull to say the least, with a stimulation factor that can only be appreciated by the most serious of lost causes. A new card won't furnish you with anything that you don't have already – in terms of extra features at least – and since even the most basic ones have at least 1MB of memory, you're unlikely to notice much of a difference with Windows either.

So that's it then – don't buy a graphics card. Well no, actually, it's not quite as straightforward as that. Do buy one but give your choice careful consideration and gen up on reviews before you hit the shops. A shiny new graphics card can soup up performance when using Windows and, depending on your old card, speed up DOS games too – but this last point is something of a bone of contention. Some people will claim that one card is faster than another, the implication being that the faster one somehow accelerates things. But again, this isn't strictly true, and extensive tests of many current cards reveal that the fastest ones only score slightly more in the *Doom 2* frame rate test. Another factor to bear in mind is that the fast cards featured here are not necessarily the most expensive; nor does it follow that they are the best Windows accelerators. Put simply, a crappy old card is probably slowing your system down, and if that is the case then a new replacement will prove beneficial.

The GrafixStar 400 is the latest card to emerge from VideoLogic and while it shares company with the cheaper Diamond Stealths at the lower end of the market, its price takes it out of the 'non-rubbish' bracket. What you get for your wedge is a pretty snappy Windows accelerator which is based on the S3 Trio64V+ chipset (the bit that does the accelerating). Apart from just speeding up Windows itself, the GrafixStar also has the bonus of built-in Video for Windows acceleration so that .AVI files can be played in a larger window without suffering horrible jerkiness.

But if video's your bag, your interest will probably lie more with MPEG, the standard that allows you to enjoy video clips full-screen with near VCR quality. Although many games already incorporate so-called 'full motion video', the difference in quality MPEG offers simply has to be seen. Most games haven't taken up MPEG for the simple reason that there aren't enough PCs with the necessary hardware to make it workable. However with the latest multimedia standard MPC3 looming on the horizon, this situation should change as an MPC3 PC will need MPEG to qualify. Up until now, the route to decent MPEG playback has been limited to the purchase of a special decoder card which would relieve you of at least £120 and also swallow up an extra slot. VideoLogic have come up with a far more elegant (and cheap) solution by fitting the GrafixStar 400 with a slot that takes their MPEGStar daughterboard; this carries a price tag of about £90 and has better quality to its credit than most of the cheaper dedicated cards.



DOS double whammy

As for DOS games, the GrafixStar scores on two fronts. First, its *Doom 2* rating compares favourably against many of the more expensive cards, and second, thanks to full VESA BIOS Extension compatibility you won't encounter any problems running in SVGA. Incidentally, it's worth bearing in mind that while most newer cards will have this facility, you should still check because universal VESA drivers can prove a bit slower.

If your PC is fitted with a cheapo card it's probably not doing you any favours, and if this is the case then an upgrade would be justified. There are plenty of other decent cards to be had in this price range, but with the GrafixStar 400 VideoLogic have successfully covered all the bases and, combined with the MPEGStar, it has everything you're ever likely to need from a graphics card. Z

Score

77

A decent graphics card that can be cheaply upgraded to MPEG.

Price: £135 for the basic 1Mb card
£104 for the MPEGStar
£227 for both
Release date: Out now
Manufacturer: VideoLogic
Tel: 01923 260511

GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

RSS160 3D Stereo Speakers

We barricaded Duncan Swain into his homestead and bargained his release with a speaker review. Later, with bleeding ears, he offered us this sound advice...

IT WASN'T THAT LONG AGO THAT A brand spanking new multimedia PC would, as a matter of course, be accompanied by a state of the art double-speed CD-ROM drive and a perfectly decent 8-bit sound card. And to extract the maximum performance from such a combination, you could also expect an obligatory set of speakers boasting the dimensions of a fag packet and which cost the manufacturer a paltry 50 pence – not surprisingly, these inevitably proved the sonic equivalent of recreating Prokofiev's *Peter And The Wolf* with two saucepans and a wooden spoon.

Nowadays, however, things are a little different. Those canny suits of the hi-fi world colluded with the PC makers to dream up yet another scheme for transferring yet more dosh into their own already overstuffed pockets. Their ploy was to hijack the latest innovation in sound quality from cinemas and TV technology and offer it to naive PC users at a fraction of the real cost, then sit back and watch the money roll in.

Speaker manufacturer Reveal are the latest to jump on this bandwagon, their ticket being the Theatra range of PC speakers which claim to offer "theatre-quality listening". Apparent 3D sound is delivered by way of the Sound Retrieval System (SRS) which, according to Reveal "produces true to life, three-dimensional sound from any audio source with just two ordinary loudspeakers."

Halfway house

We looked at the bottom of the range RSS160 speaker set which is supplied with its own remote control unit. The idea is that the speakers can be either wall-mounted or placed on stands (although you would have to be pretty sad to do either) while allowing control over the volume, treble and bass as well as toggling of the SRS from the comfort of your desk. (Style tip: if you don't want look like a complete knob you can attach the remote control unit to the top of the active – or powered – speaker and leave them both on your desk.)

To be honest, as far as sound quality and SRS is concerned, I could hear little evidence of its impact. Flicking the SRS button in gameplay certainly lent more welly to the sound effects and music, but at no point did I find myself "immersed" in sound as the manual had promised. The bass lacked any thunderous lows and the treble was a bit shrill – and giving either a halfway crank with the volume soon had distortion rearing its ugly hissing head.

Ignore all the blurb on the box about the 160 watt Peak Music Power and 3D stereo sound etc, etc – if you need a decent pair of speakers for playing games and listening to CDs, then these will do an adequate job of it. Lump them on the desk about three feet from your ears and you'll find that there's plenty of decibels on tap that can be pumped out without any adverse effects on sound quality. But if you're expecting a pair of £99 speakers to kick out a serious surround sound treat, forget it. Z

Score

67

Don't believe the hype.

Price: £99 **Release date:** Out now
Manufacturer: Reveal
Tel: 0181-845 7400

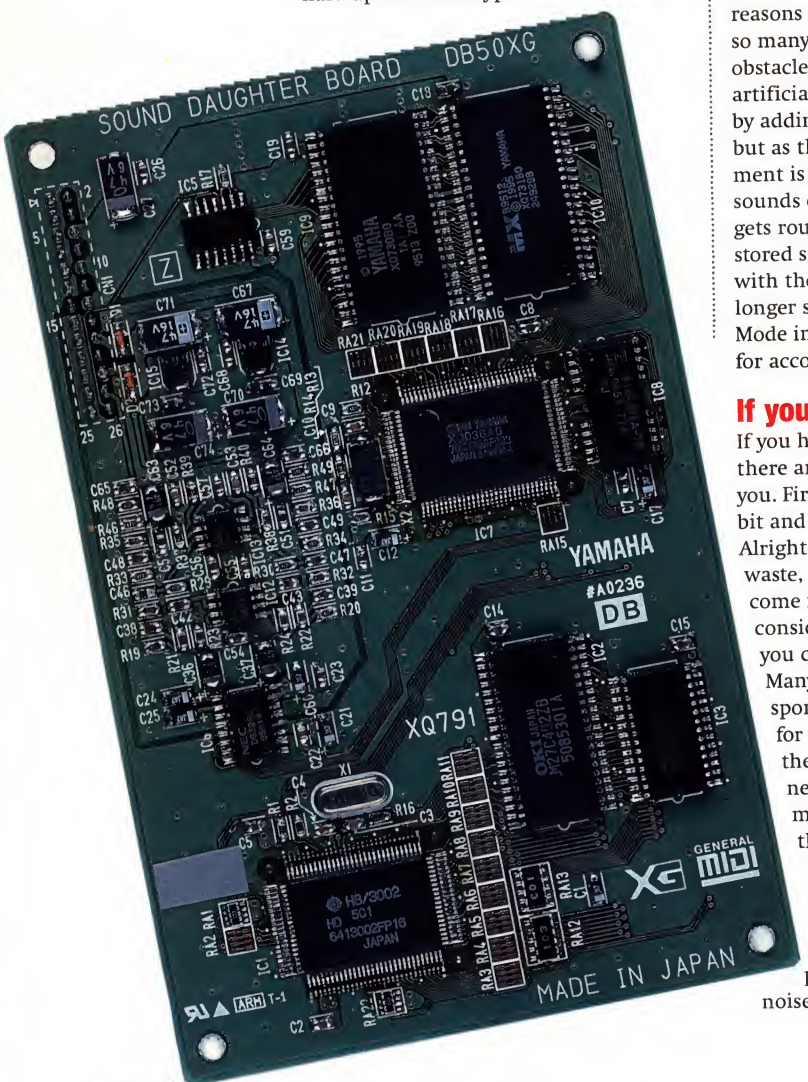
GATEWAY2000
"You've got a friend in the business."

Yamaha DB50XG

PC ZONE Recommended

Yamaha have reached the conclusion that your average sound card could do with a bit of tarting up, hence their new wavetable add-on. Our very own Dave Mathieson (in need of some tarting up himself) investigates...

SOUND CARDS ARE CARDS THAT PLAY sounds, and what's more, using the cunning of Satan himself, they manage to emit such sounds simultaneously with whatever happens to be occurring on the screen. This talent has endeared them to two kinds of computer user: games players, and hard-up musician types who can't afford a proper synthesiser. The majority of sound cards are made up of two different bits – the sample bit (explosions), and the synthesiser bit (music). Just about everyone has a 16-bit sound card these days, but as the '16-bit-ness' actually refers to its sampling abilities, regardless of what card you use, the reproduction of any effects is going to be pretty much the same.



The Gorgonzola remix

What sorts the men out from the boys is a sound card's music playback abilities, and if you're cursed with an old FM card you will have noticed a certain aura of cheese about the soundtracks to your fave games. FM is a technique for generating sounds which was invented more than a decade ago – it's also one of the reasons why the early '80s spawned so many poor records. The main obstacle with FM is that it tries to artificially recreate 'proper' instruments by adding basic waveforms together, but as the true anatomy of an instrument is rather different, obviously it sounds crap. Wavetable synthesis gets round this however, by using stored samples of actual instruments, with the result that *Duke Nukem* no longer sounds like he's got Depeche Mode in their pre 'hard rockers' phase for accompaniment.

If you missed the wave...

If you haven't got a wavetable card, there are two courses of action open to you. First, ditch the old card, sampler bit and all, and buy yourself a new one. Alright, this might seem a bit of a waste, but seeing as decent cards now come in at under £100, it's well worth considering. If that doesn't appeal, you can upgrade your existing card. Many SoundBlaster compatible cards sport their own WaveBlaster slot for Creative's wavetable add-on; these daughterboards provide a new set of instrument sounds for music without interfering with the existing card.

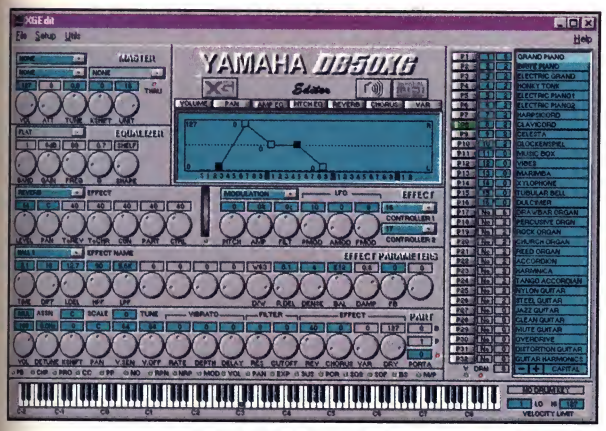
And the DB50XG is indeed such a beast, and since Yamaha know a thing or two about real musical instruments, they are presumably clued up as to what noises they should make. Installing the card is easier than getting stitched up for a round in the pub, and there's no annoying 'might mess up your existing settings' software to load. As already mentioned, the card plugs into your existing sound card, and it's sufficiently small so it won't take up any extra space. What's more, it uses the audio outputs on your card so you don't even have to re-connect your speakers.

The manual only covers set-up for Windows 3.x, and it was a while before I realised that the WaveBlaster socket on a sound card is actually a separate MIDI port, which the DB50XG perceives as an external MIDI sound module. In musical terms, getting it up and running was simply a matter of letting my sequencing software know that there was another port (and therefore 16 more channels) available. If this last sentence means nothing to you – or even if does, but you couldn't give a monkeys – then you'll probably be wanting to know about games compatibility.

Nose-bleed techno, anyone?

To reiterate for the less bright out there, the DB50XG is for music and has no effect on the digital sound effects in games – but the sounds on the card are loads better than anything you'll find on a full sound card. Providing your game has either General MIDI or WaveBlaster music options, the DB50XG will rock – and in a big way. It's impossible to adequately describe the aural impact of something in mere words, and rather than resort to using clichéd words such as 'meaty' and 'crisp' (and generally sounding like a complete arse), suffice to say that sound-wise the DB50XG is excellent and can only add further enhancement to the gameplay experience.

Of course, it would be hard to justify spending £150 just to improve the music in games, and if this is the only purpose you have in mind for the DB50XG, then you'll be wasting a lot of its potential. This card gives the muso instruments by the truckload (over 500 count 'em!), and by way of a further bonus there are loads of on-board effects and controllers too, all of which can be tweaked in real-time. The sound themselves take up 4MB of ROM, and th



(Above) The XG Editor... Looks complicated? It is! But it's well worth spending time getting to grips with it.

is clearly evident in their quality which compares well to the on-board sounds of say, the AWE32. As mentioned earlier (pay attention at the back), the DB50XG uses a separate MIDI port, so it has 16 MIDI channels all to itself.

Overall then, the DB50XG holds enormous possibilities for those who want to dabble with tunes, and for a darn sight less than what you'd pay for a similarly specced sound module. There is one disadvantage however – to get the most out of its musical abilities you'll either need to learn some pretty techie MIDI stuff, or alternatively get your hands on the XG Editor program; the program is an extra £25 but it is available as shareware so at least you can try before you buy.

If your only interest is in playing games, there are several other things you should consider before spending your 150 notes on this card. But if you've already got a 16-bit FM card, the DB50XG will give you the best of both worlds, and even those who already have wavetables will doubtless agree that these sounds are hard to beat. For the creative composer, this card is nothing less than excellent value for money, and an audition is a must if you're about to invest in a new synth. Z

Score

89

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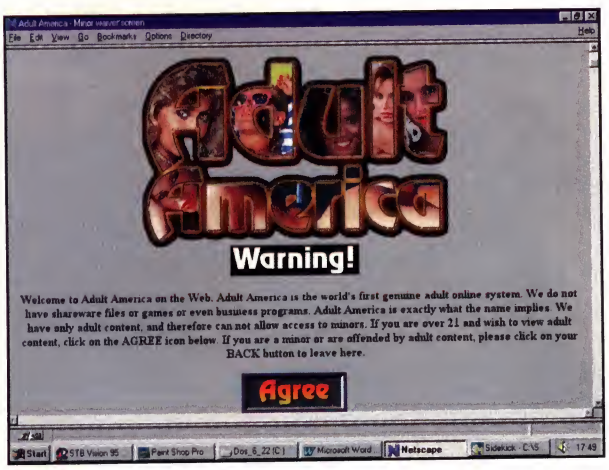
ZONE ON-LINE

Porn Free

Lap it up or spit it out, porn is the backbone of the Internet – a recent survey found that 90 per cent of users spent most of their time downloading it. It's here to stay. Or is it? The Communications Decency Act may put an end to it all – and a lot more besides. Duncan Swain takes a very long look, but purely in the interests of research, naturally.



(Left) You'd turn back at this point if you weren't 21... wouldn't you?

YUP, WE'VE FINALLY SUCCUMBED... WE JUST HAD TO DO AN 'Internet Porn' article. Well, how long did you think we could hold out? But should we tackle it by mounting a campaign of outrage, or should we give you the *crème de la crème* of naughty Web sites and Usenet groups in all its fleshy pink glory? Whatever your personal predilections, there's something here for you... (Editor's note: Those of you who aren't already suffering from self-inflicted blindness may have gathered by now that there are some deliberate puns in this passage. The temptation inevitably proved too hard to resist.)

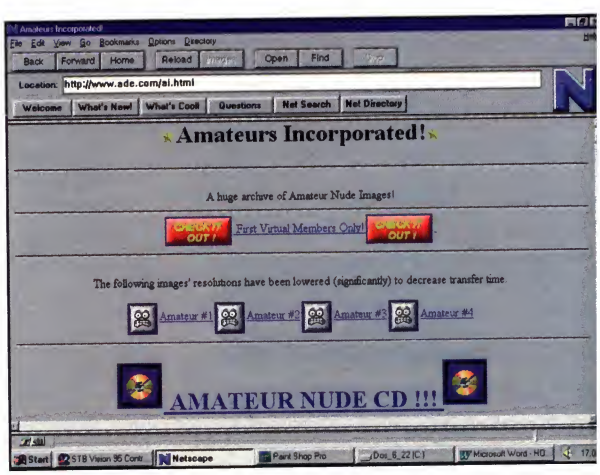
For that faceless body of sad and lonely individuals out there who live their (sex) lives vicariously via their PC screens, the Internet exists for just one purpose alone – the unending search for porn. This ultimately soul destroying pursuit of largely anonymous, naked or scantily clad people exhibiting, inserting, spreading, thrusting, using and even abusing their genitalia either alone, with partners, in groups, or perhaps with a favourite pet, is an unending mission for more people (well, generally men, anyway) than you could ever imagine.

Unfortunately though, those who search for kicks with their keyboards are in for a bit of a shock – two shocks in fact. First off they'll soon find (and this applies in particular to the part of the Internet lovingly referred to as the Web by all those greasy-haired pale and spotty 'surfers' with yellow fingernails) porn much harder to come (whoops) by. Second, their near religious hunt for the Holy Grail of porno pics could also be hitting them a lot harder in the wallet. Oh yes, worldly-wise operators of porn sites have been very quick to take maximum advantage of the fact that while you're spanking your monkey they can be banking your money.

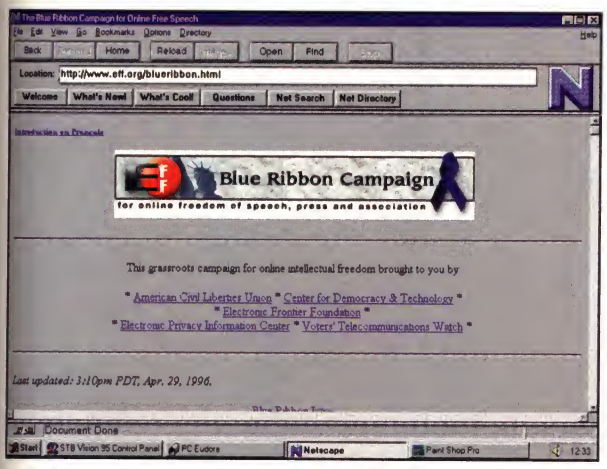
KISSING THE WORM

With just a few swift clicks of a mouse, the Internet can provide virtually anything within the bounds of a fevered imagination And this is where the problem lies: it's now reached the point where there's such an overwhelming amount of material available on the Internet that it's becoming impossible to police. Governments across the globe are finally realising the true nature of what their citizens are accessing through the everyday PC – and they're starting to get a trifle concerned. Various acts, bills, laws and legislation are being passed left, right and centre in an attempt to sterilise the seemingly out of control and evil Internet and transform it into the antiseptic equivalent of a PG-rated movie.

It's no wonder that most of these legal developments are gathering pace in America, a nation with an imminent election hanging over its head. As a result, there's been a sudden rash of legislation which free speech supporters firmly believe is



(Right) Readers' Wives, Internet-style.



being used merely to appease voters, and particularly those in the incredibly powerful US religious lobby.

Senator Bill Exon has proposed the Communications Decency Act (CDA) as a means of introducing the furthest reaching and most controversial controls to impact telecommunications in the last 60 years. Its mission is to outlaw obscene material from the Internet, and to render service providers liable so that children will be prevented from accessing unsavoury pictures of bizarre sexual behaviour. Under the terms of the Act, first offenders can be convicted of a felony and receive a prison sentence of up to six years, as well as getting clobbered with a $250,000 fine.

But, says the anti-censorship lobby, the Act could precipitate much wider reaching implications. The lobby argues that it will outlaw access to works of art and literature on the Net. The new regulations would close the doors to certain music, film and – perhaps most importantly – health-related sites. Even the *King James Bible* would be out of bounds, simply because it contains the word 'piss', deemed obscene in the States by the US Supreme Court.

A concerted crusade is under way in America, with activists encouraging supporters to sport a blue ribbon on their Web pages denoting allegiance to free speech. The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) is organising a high profile campaign and this has already sparked the posting of a veritable

(Above left) Hard-core urban terrorists fighting legislation don't wear blue ribbons.

(Below) ...More like 15 years old, if you ask me.

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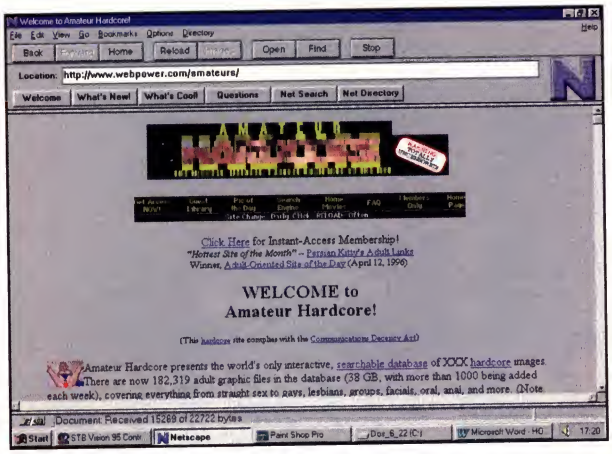
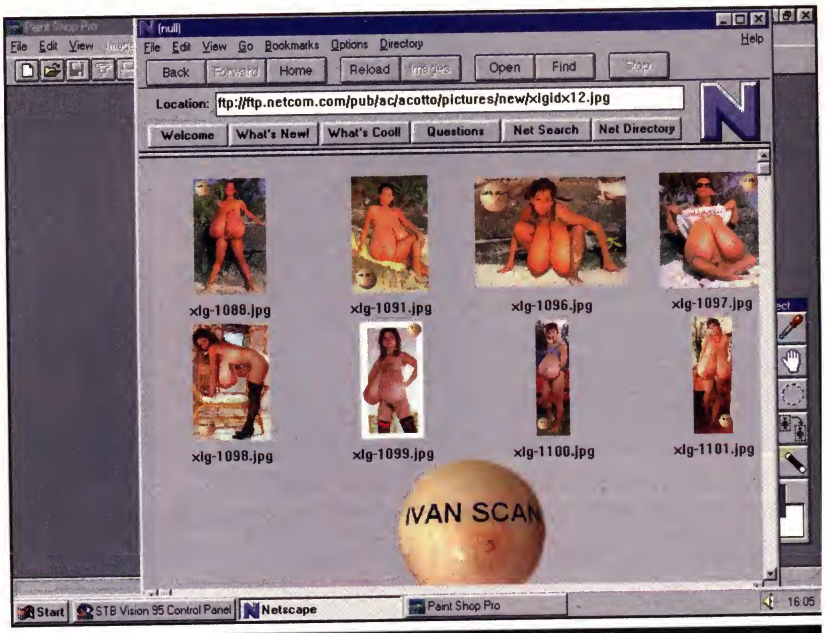




(Above left) Oo-er! The perv's dream – a searchable database of all things porn.

(Above) Who's been touching up these girls then?

« virtual forest worth of e-mail to Washington. Companies have turned their Web sites black in sympathy.

And, perhaps surprisingly when most campaigns of this type – and especially where the wearing of ribbons is concerned – are doomed to fall on deaf ears, the campaign has at least slowed down the legislation. Campaigners have managed to cajole the US government into deferring enforcement of the CDA, while in the UK the government has launched its own war against the Internet. It has drafted a Bill updating the Libel Act of 1845 and Defamation Act of 1952 so that it would embrace both on-line services and the Internet. The main drawback here is for service providers, who will be liable for any damages if libellous material is found on any of their sites. This is only in the early debating stages, and it looks as if most European providers will strongly object.

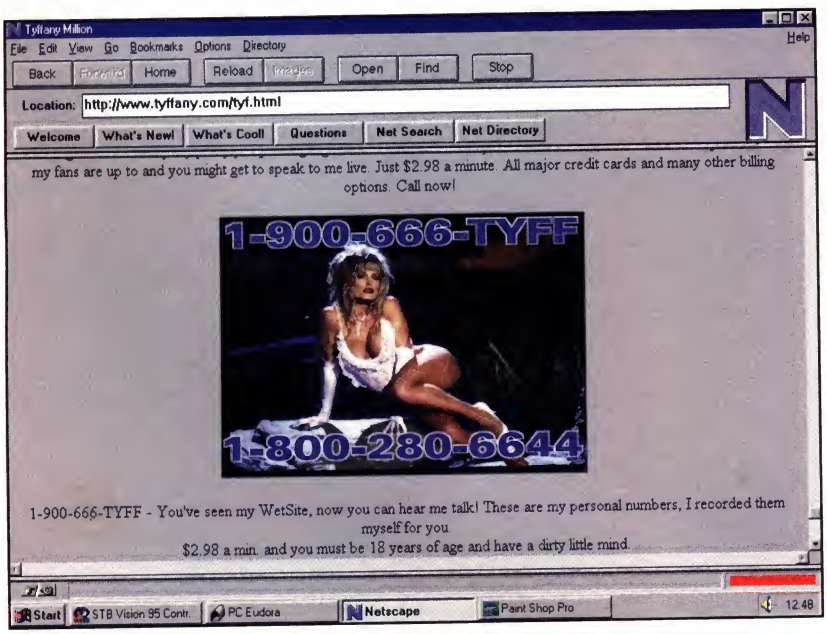
BEAT THE STICK

An unlikely alliance of porn merchants, wet liberals and die-hard Internet freaks are grouping together to do battle against the powers that be. US porn sites have been making a piece-meal effort to appease the American government by claiming to have made access to their sites more difficult by screening for underage pocket billiards players. However, all this really means is – depending where the server is based – a few pages of statements warning users under the age of 18 or 21 to turn back now because 'adult material' will follow if they continue. Hardly Fort Knox now, is it?

Meanwhile, other porn site operators have combined good citizenship with business acumen by providing costly 'members only' sites. Once they have verified your age and proof of identity, a monthly fee of $10 or more brings you varying amounts of quality porn to take you to hand-shandy heaven.

(Below) Joystick jockeys may soon have to get used to paying for their porn.

(Below right) Yanks bang on and on about fighting the system! (Yawn.)

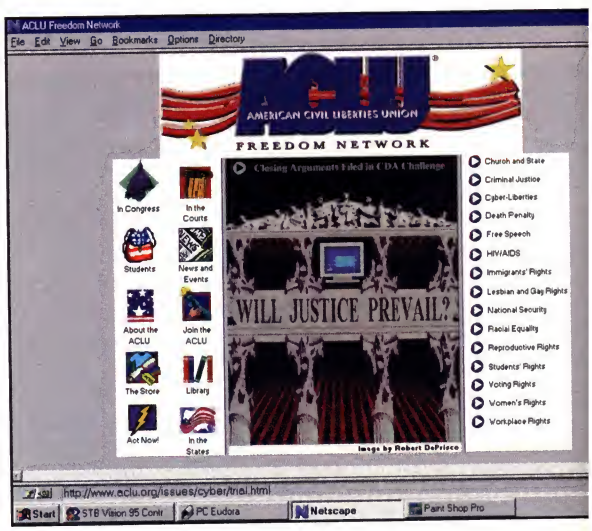


SWING THE LAMP

Unbelievable as it sounds, the one place that appears to have escaped relatively unscathed is the one place that most people believe should be censored – the Usenet newsgroups. While it's getting harder and harder (whoops again) to find anything stronger than a bared nipple or a wisp of pant moustache on the Web, the newsgroups remain a perv's paradise. You'll find the most unusual and specific sexual proclivities catered for here – groups for *wet and messy, senior citizens, big folks, biker chicks, bondage, cheerleaders*, the intriguingly titled *facials* and the worryingly named *furry*, all alongside a bevy of even more tasteless choices. Don't get too smug though – any legislation that is introduced in either this country or abroad will cover the Internet as a whole, and even Usenet is likely to be heavily censored once this is in place.

It would seem that regardless of the protestations of a bunch of liberal-minded professors, techie nerds and Brian Eno, governments worldwide will soon seize control of the once free and easy flower child of free speech and tolerance that was the Internet, mutating it instead into something incapable of offending the nearest Baptist minister or paranoid politician. Porn will obviously be the first victim to fall foul of such a censorship, quickly followed by anything which could be deemed politically risky, and the odd instruction manual on urban terrorism.

Ultimately, for any of you who enjoy nothing better than a preference for typing one-handed or perhaps firmly grasping a joystick in both hands at once (if you know what I mean), your days of perusing fleshy contortions for free may well be numbered, so make the most of it while you still can. Z



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GAME - AND GET PLAYING!

Artificial Intelligence

Ever screamed at troops, beasts and vehicles during tense combat situations because they just won't do what they're bloody well told? Pete Hawley wrestles with the issue of Artificial Intelligence and shouts, "Oi! Nod Harvesters... No!"

(Right) The more intelligent PC's get, the more intelligent PC games get. Scenarios like this one where big spooky hands suddenly jump out of your PC are becoming increasingly likely. Probably.

A FEW WEEKS AGO I MADE A BIG mistake – I had the audacity to criticise one of the best-selling games of last year, *Command & Conquer*. Certain members of the *Zone* team thought I'd lost my mind, and some even went as far as suggesting that a course of Artificial Intelligence programming to increase my performance might be in order. But why was I chastising one of the finest games of recent times, I hear you ask? Well, the answer is relatively straightforward. *Command & Conquer* suffers from the same problem as many other strategy games: namely that they look wonderful and the gameplay seems fine to start with, but the deeper you get the more noticeable the problems with the Artificial Intelligence become.

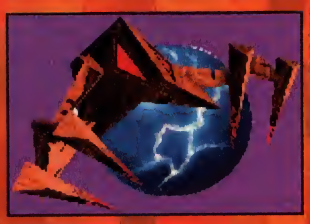
Let's take a look at a few examples. You're playing *Command & Conquer*. You've just directed your GDI harvester to the nearest field of Tiberium and left it to get on with the job, only to return 25 minutes later to find it parked in the middle of bloody nowhere being about as much use to your growing war effort as a chocolate teapot. *Warcraft 2* has its problems too. Have you ever directed Orc or Human units to a spot on the map just two or three steps away from where they're standing, only to have them bugger off halfway around the level to get there?

Then of course there are the *Actua Soccer* players that fall flat on their faces for no apparent reason, and the CPU which suddenly decides to flick control to a player who's nowhere near the ball – and we've yet to mention the poor performance of the most important and infuriating artificially intelligent player on the pitch, the goalkeeper.

And who could ever forget the stupid snake-trail of drivers in *NASCAR Racing*, or how about the incredibly illogical behaviour of the Stormtroopers in *Dark Forces*... Is this ringing any bells by any chance?

Impressive AI!

Over the last year we've seen games with strikingly good AI. They are...



Descent, Descent 2
Excellent evasion and pursuit tactics from the enemy robots.

X-COM: Terror From The Deep
Tremendous alien responses to all your strategic manoeuvres.

Virtual Pool
Absolutely faultless non-player character hustling from the PC opponents.

Civilization 2
A great follow-up to the original game, this has simply incredible multi-NPC management and strategies.

Doom, Doom 2
Er, brain-dead zombies follow you around shooting you in the bottom?

Magic Carpet 2
Great carpet action against enemy wizards and loads of creatures, especially during a race to dominate a level.

F1GP2
Fantastic opponent race ethics. Out-brake them on the corners and they give way.

NBA Live '96
This is a thoroughly enjoyable game thanks to the realistic blocking and defence moves from the opponent team.

ILLUSTRATION: PAUL PHIPPENS

Five frustrating minutes with... Command & Conquer

Your GDI forces are now up to strength and are awaiting your orders, ready to pounce on the well-defended NOD base.

(a) The rather nasty NOD base. Just look at all those soldiers and engineers waiting to strike. Well, that air strike should be coming up to strength round about now.

(e) I can't believe this! Why is that mammoth tank going on a tour of the coast when all I asked it to do was cross the bridge? And what's happened to the other lot?

(b) Only one thing for it! Reduce the majority of them to ashes with an air strike and then prepare for a GDI assault to finish them off. Mind you, that obelisk could give me something to worry about...

(f) Nooooo! The lads have suddenly decided to stop and sniff the Tiberium plants. "Remember what happened the last time you walked into that shit? Your lungs fell out of your arseholes! Why are you doing it again?"

(c) Here come the boys in all their glory, ready to spray the NOD scum with lead and put an end to their tyrannical rule of the civilian populace. Tanks against buildings and blokes against blokes. Cool!

(g) I try to get them out of the Tiberium a.s.a.p. However, the boys still think it would be an excellent idea to wander through the trees for a while. While they're at it, they trot into the Tiberium again. More casualties.

(d) But what's this? Where are those idiots going? Oh, I get it, there's a tank crossing the bridge. Rather than wait for it to get over, the boys have decided to walk halfway across the level to get to the other side. Cheers guys.

(h) After ten minutes of extensive troop manoeuvres the lads finally arrive at the designated spot. But what's the point of starting an assault when half of them are dead? Should be enough firepower to take out a small farmstead though!

The sound of a forceful punch and a PC hastily powering down can be heard throughout the *PC Zone* office. Another unsuccessful *C&C* mission.

A game of two halves

Throughout this feature I'll be focussing on a couple of titles in particular that have irritated me somewhat over the last few months. I'm sure you'll agree that poor AI can turn you off a game completely, but before I start ranting and raving it must be said that for programming and development teams the AI is the most complicated feature of the game's engine to perfect.

AI is the acronym on just about every gameplayer's lips, but exactly what is it and what are these programmer blokes trying to achieve? Well, basically they're attempting to re-create the intelligent behaviour and unpredictable nature of another human opponent. Let's face it, once the initial impact value of a game such as *Doom* has worn off, there's very little to hold your interest beyond a few months. This is why the 'intelligence' of your enemies is so important if you are to have any real challenge as you blast through level after level of gun-toting bad guys.

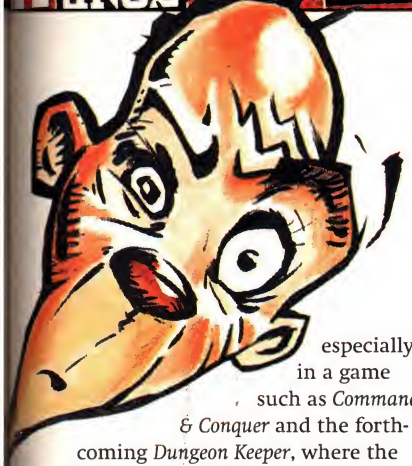
On the other hand, one of the finest examples of impressive AI in recent times is the behaviour and reactions of the enemy mining droids in *Descent 2* – you can actually hear enemy robots powering-up in the near distance as you cautiously drift through the dark menacing passages and caverns. But don't just take my word for it: next time you play it, watch for their responses. Some fire immediately before ducking behind the nearest pillar, and then strafe in and out of your viewpoint launching missiles, while others begin to navigate their way around the corridor desperately trying to find a way to launch their attack from behind.

Descent 2 is one of the only games where you really do feel that you're up against a crafty, devious and intelligent foe, which is hardly surprising given that it visibly weaves and strafes out of your way – after all, can you name another title where your enemy looks like it's trying to stay alive?

Let's get technical

I could go on at length about artificial intelligence and the scientific reasons for its development, but down on paper it's about as riveting as watching a snail marathon, so I'll keep it short and simple. Artificial Intelligence algorithms in the context of a game environment can be broken down into two main categories: Navigation and Situation. These are basically the stages at which a character or unit has to make a 'choice', or a decision.

The navigation aspect is incredibly important,



especially in a game such as *Command & Conquer* and the forthcoming *Dungeon Keeper*, where the whole crux of mission success rests on your units and soldiers arriving at your desired location with one click of the mouse button. But what happens if your units come across an immovable object? Well, it's easy – they walk around it. But what happens if they get attacked on the way to their destination? In an ideal world they'd stop and fight and then carry on with their objectives, although we all know that's not always the case.

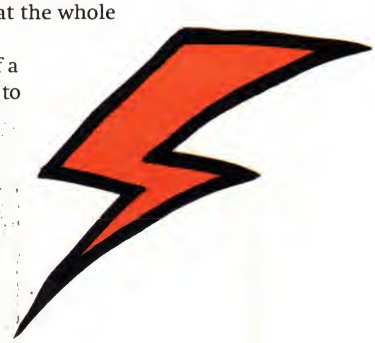
Apart from the basic stuff, the AI has billions of other things to deal with, especially in network games where up to eight players are pushing the game engine to the limits. Taking *Warcraft 2* as an example again, your units can meet to engage in combat on any part of the map and be affected by all kinds of outside influences including their position relative to the enemy unit, their strength, moral, speed, enemy location, navigational aspects of the attack and attack range. Add all these facets together and you can begin to appreciate the amount of effort that's involved in getting the AI balance right.

Some non-player characters (NPCs) constantly adapt to your actions and even 'learn' your playing style – and that's at the same time as looking after themselves and finding their way around. Through a series of complex algorithms the NPCs embark on a kind of learning curve, slowly building up data on your habits and weaknesses and then altering the way they behave accordingly.

Getting it right

For a programming team to get the AI just right at the Beta stage, they need to subject the game to weeks of rigorous playtesting against human opponents. Many American developers I spoke to, including some of the big corporate fish, admitted that they will release what can only be described as Beta software, followed by patches at a later date. It's pretty disgraceful behaviour if you ask me, but in America the larger software distributors are able to afford this little luxury, as simply uploading the AI patch onto the company Web or FTP site seems to keep the American game-buying public happy enough – but then this is all very well when you have a thriving communications economy that costs next to nothing to get on-line. But as many of you will have found to your cost, it's a different story here on the other side of the pond.

But game development is ever changing, so it's natural that the whole ethos of AI programming is undergoing something of a transformation too. I spoke to iD's Mike Wilson and Jay Wilbur at the recent ECTS (European Computer Trade Show) in London and they made no secret of the fact that to them, the single-player game could soon be a thing of the past. "*Quake* is primarily a network/multi-player game," Mike told me. "We've worked real hard on the character AI in the single-player version – especially the human soldiers on the later levels – but if aspects of the single-player game



Bullfrog clever? Not 'arf!

During a recent trip to Bullfrog Productions in the wonderful Surrey countryside I thought I'd catch up with the programmers of *Dungeon Keeper* and *Theme Hospital* to find out what nightmares they've encountered balancing the AI.

Ian Shaw was busily working away at what to the untrained eye looked like an incredibly complex test bed for the AI engine. This AI engine will see the light of day in a number of Bullfrog titles, although most of the work is obviously concentrated on *Keeper* and *Hospital* at the moment.

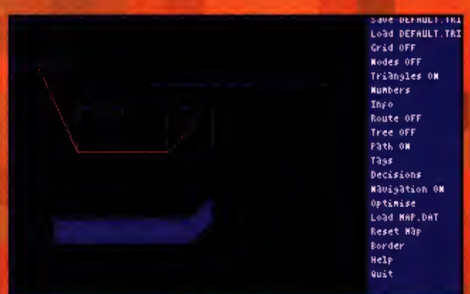
I saw the navigation test bed for the dungeons in *Dungeon Keeper* and the simple ward layouts for *Theme Hospital* and how each character and object was to be incorporated in the finished product. "This system is more or less unique to *Dungeon Keeper*," Ian explained. "There's no way this system could be incorporated into a football game, for example, because the game structure is so different."

The screenshots below illustrate the complex routines and algorithms included in the engine that make sure your characters arrive where you want them to. Mark Webley, the producer on *Theme Hospital*, then incorporates the AI engine into 'his' game and through a long period of playtesting gets the game balance right. Any problems with the AI are highlighted during this period, and the whole thing tweaked by Ian through the test bed once again if necessary.

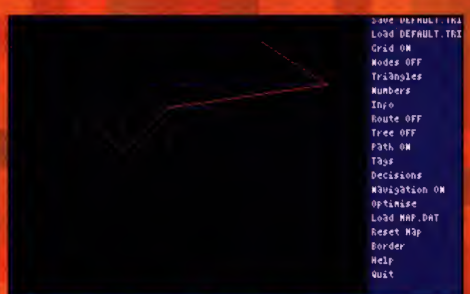
(1) This is a very simple dungeon layout to demonstrate a basic navigation routine.

(2) The red line shows the intended route of the game's character. The white shows the quickest routes.

(3) Guh! Complicated stuff. The green lines are the number of calculated routes considered.



(1) In *Theme Hospital* a patient is looking to move to the coke machine – top left, moving around the chair.



(2) Another patient navigating a chair and wall to sit in the other, because the nearest one is taken.

(3) A wall in front of the chair isn't a problem. This test engine ensures the characters go where you ask.

Five frustrating minutes with... Actua Soccer

Top *Zone* favourite, *Actua Soccer* has been guilty of prompting yells of indignation which shoot right off the Decibel scale...

The teams stand motionless – presumably they're trying to stare each other out. Stuart Pearce isn't playing so they decide to call it a draw. The whistle blows, play starts and you pass the ball to the nearest player. So far so good.

Being a firm believer in long-ball tactics you decide to hoof it down the pitch to your right-winger. A tap of the pass button and the ball is launched into the target area, hitting your winger on the back of the legs (doh!).

You turn your winger (whom you're now controlling) and chase after the ball. As you run towards it, your player clashes with an opposing player and falls to the ground (Ref!).

The opposition now has the ball and is lobbing it towards your goal. You desperately try and select one of your defenders to cover the situation, but while your winger was dusting himself down both opposition forwards ran into your two centre-halves and all four players are now lying on the ground (double doh!).

You have no defensive player available, so you guide your winger back to make the crucial tackle. By now one of the opposition forwards has got up and made a shot. "Just stand up will you!" Luckily your computer-controlled keeper makes a fantastic reflex save (sigh!).

Your men charge back up the field and wait for the goal kick. The keeper (still controlled by the AI) bounces the ball a couple of times and then throws it out directly to an opposition striker, who then shoots. The keeper saves it, but takes the ball over the line. NooOOOO! Why did you do that? Why didn't you just kick the ball up the field instead of throwing it out? WHY ARE YOU SO BLOODY STUPID!

Cue more rantings along the lines of "I hate you! I hate all of you! If you want something done properly, you have to do it yourself! I'm taking my ball and going home!"

start to interfere with the engine or multi-player aspects, then they'll be the first to go." Judging by their past efforts this would appear to be a philosophy that works.

Future, schmuture

So what can we expect from AI in the future? As the trend towards network and Internet play continues, it's highly likely that single-player AI will become less of a necessity as developers try to strike the perfect balance within a multi-player environment. *Quake* will be the first game to demonstrate this; to be perfectly honest the single-player aspects iD have shown us look dangerously close to *Doom* for our liking, but the network features are far and away the most impressive seen in any title to date. This, say iD, was their aim from the very beginning of the game's development.

Mike Wilson from iD says AI for multi-player games is their prime concern. Will single player games soon be a thing of the past?

Meanwhile, Bullfrog's *Dungeon Keeper* is shaping up as *the* best single-player game of all time. It has an incredibly sophisticated AI system, killer gameplay and highly original network options – and the Dungeon Master's ability to build the dungeon on the fly as other network players play within the level in a first-person perspective is awesome.

And what do these two masters of game development and creation have in common? Simple – a love of games above and beyond the call of corporate budgets, and playtesting environments unrivalled in the industry. It's evident from the finished product that weeks and weeks have gone into playtesting the AI features, leading to a perfect game balance which offers months of gameplaying enjoyment rather than a few days. In the immortal words of Peter Molyneux, MD of Bullfrog Productions, "AI is without a doubt the real future of game development. Forget sterile environments with rendered characters and backgrounds with incredible polygon counts, that's secondary to the importance of the game's AI. In five years people will be talking about the impressive AI engine in a game rather than the polygon count, which seems to be the current trend."

Z

SPECIAL THANKS to Ian Shaw at Bullfrog for simplifying and demystifying such a complicated subject!

If you have any questions about this feature and/or would like to raise any valid points with Pete about AI, or you have any interesting or amusing tales of frustrating hours of gameplay, you can e-mail him at:

pete@dpublish.demon.co.uk

We regret that we can't guarantee a reply, but we will read all submissions. Thanks in advance!

MADNESS, MUTATION & AFTERNOON TEA.

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VIC TOKAI more gameplay

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We've tried our very hardest to get the Boggit into a good mood and answer your gaming dilemmas without being insulting, but well – it would probably be easier to change the direction of the earth as it revolves around the sun... Remember – you can always give our TruePlayer Tips guy a ring on Wednesday afternoons. He's *much* nicer.

TROUBLESHOOTER

Write to PC Zone

If you have a query concerning a role-playing game or adventure, or you have a hot tip or a cheat to share, then write to:

The Boggit
29 Blackthorn Drive
Larkfield, Aylesford
KENT ME20 6NR

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0171 917 7698

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READ THIS!

Because our tips line is so busy, and because the man who answers the phone is only a mere mortal, we need you to prove that you have actually bought the magazine and that you're not just a freeloading blagger. To do this, our tips geezer will ask you for a password before you request your tip. This month's password is... *"Pucker up darling, I'm all yours".*

HEX	DECIMAL
09H	09
0AH	10
0FH	15
10H	16
20H	32
28H	40
32H	50
40H	64
63H	99
64H	100
C8H	200
FAH	250
FFH	255

The Boggit's Mailbag

Simon The Sorcerer

Help! I can't find the mahogany wood which I need to collect the woodworm. I expected the woodcutter to give me some wood after I gave him the axe he needed, but he just walks off and disappears into thin air.

Joyce Kelsey, Cleveland

Life's a bitch. You spend hours trying to help some people and then they just walk off without so much as giving you a sniff of their toffee apple. Take my advice, don't help anyone, they're all ungrateful swines – if you want something you've just got to help yourself. Once the woodcutter has gone, nip inside his cottage and use the fire extinguisher (which you should have pinched from the dragon's cave) to put his fire out. (I prefer to extinguish fires using a more traditional method involving ten pints of lager and a short wait, but we won't go into that here.) There is a metal pin on the table nearby which you can use to move the hook in the fireplace. Moving the hook will open the secret passage which leads to the wood store.

The Tracer Sanction

The Tracer Sanction is an adventure game by Activision, and it's now about ten years old. I never managed to complete it, but would very much like to. I need help near the end in the maze. If you or any other readers could help, please contact me at the address below.

Gerald Dodds
3 Richie Court, Kilmarnock
Ayrshire KA3 7QF

Well, I thought I knew every adventure game ever written, but I confess I've never heard of this one. If anyone can help, please get in touch with the poor soul.

Alone In The Dark

After I put the talisman down to stop that guy firing fireballs at me I become completely stuck. What do I do now?

Kiranna Tamang, London

Once you get to the altar and drop the talisman you must pick up the hook. Make sure your oil lamp is lit and then throw it at the tree – things will now get extremely interesting, extremely quickly. You've got to get out, and I mean now. Head for the rocky ledge to the bad guy's right. Use the hook to open the door, enter the maze, and use the hook on the door to your right. Run back around the edge of the water and up into the tunnel. Go right, straight up the tunnel and through the hole into the cellar. Run to the ground floor and out of the front door.

Prisoner Of Ice

I would appreciate some help with this latest Infogrames game. I've made it back to the Falkland Islands, but I can't seem to get any further. I can't figure out the combination to the safe in Captain Sear's office.

Jonathan Passlow, Australia

I see you still need us Poms for something after all. What happened to all that manly Aussie talk about effete, pommy pooftas who don't know one end of a tinnie from another? Hmm... Never mind though, I'm feeling fairly generous (a rare emotion for me), so here's how to get round your problem...

When you arrive at Edward's Base, pick up the cigarettes and the ID file from the table. Open the left drawer and you'll find a sheet of paper inside which contains the code for the safe. After you watch the film in the briefing room, search the central bookcase and you'll find a white book. The second part of the safe code is inside it.

Hand Of Fate

I have managed to solve quite a few of the puzzles in this game, which I'm actually quite pleased about as most of them are a complete load of BOLLOCKS. However, I've run into trouble getting the boat to Volcania – the only place it will go to is Mustard Island, and the only thing I seem to be able to do there is get eaten by the natives. I'm not the

only one who's having problems though, because a friend of mine is stuck in exactly the same place.

Alan Bowman

So bloody what if you have a friend who's also stuck at the same place? There are no points for finding another plonker as dim as yourself...

Where the ship goes is determined by the compass which they steer by. Now if some sneaky swine were to place a magnet next to the compass, that would change things quite a bit. I assume you already possess a magnet? For those readers who don't, I suggest you look carefully at horseshoes and think about the power of electricity.

Monkey Island II

I am stuck on Part 4. I've got LeChuck's underwear, part of his beard, dad's head, and a doll of LeChuck. But how do I get the last ingredient to make the voodoo doll?

(Name withheld to prevent abuse)

Now this answer is a bit sickening, so I'm only going to say it once and we won't discuss it afterwards, okay? Give LeChuck the hankie and then take it back again. The hankie is the final ingredient you need.

Terminator: Future Shock

Press <ALT\> then enter code:

version	Version info
versionid	Version info
hello	Try it and see
garble	Ungarbles the cheat codes
superuzi	Gives the super-uzi
firepower	Gives all weapons
nextmission	Advance to next mission
icantsee	Gives infra-red vision
whoami	Shows your name
counters	Current x, y position
bandaid	Increases health

Pitfall 95

MEOWMEOWLIKEMEOWMAN
Gives nine lives
EATMOREBRAN
Gives nine continues

(Right) You're never 'Alone In The Dark' if you're a *PC Zone* reader. No matter what your problem is, we've got someone special here to hold your hand.

(Far right) *Stonekeep:* Our tips will make you near-invincible – and by the looks of this dragon you'll need it.

The fact that you've turned to this section of the mag must mean you need help... ol' Boggit will try and make you feel worthless, but at least it's slightly better than chewing your nails to the quick and tearing your hair out... isn't it?

HATMAN
Turns you into hatman
HATMAN (typed a second time)
You're normal, but all animate things are hatman
HATMAN (typed a third time)
Back to normal
IDDQD
Message "Sorry this ain't *Doom*"
FRAMERATE
Shows the frame rate
FIVEEASYPIECES
Gets you to the 5th level
PUMPYOUUP
Gives you 99 items of each weapon
LETSDOTHETIMEWARP
Back to original *Pitfall* game
IDBUYTHATFORADOLLAR
Enables access to all levels

Stonekeep

In the SAVEGAME directory, use a hex editor on the GAMEINFO.SAV file. Offset 155 is your vitality, 157 your max vitality. (Replace 155-159 with E7 03 E7 03 to get 999 hit points.)

0623 for your first character
0AF2 for your second character
0FC1 for your third character

The Need For Speed

Winning the tournament once gets you the extra track Lost Vegas. When you've completed the second tournament, a check of the credits will reveal these codes:

EAC POWR	Bonus car
EAC WARP	Speeds up gameplay
EAC RALY	Turns Rusty Springs into a dirt track

Note: There must be a space between <EAC> and the code word. Type in the code when prompted for the player's name.

Ultimate Doom

IDDT
Typing this while on the map screen will illuminate dark areas; typing it again will reveal the location of all objects and enemies; typing it once more will revert things to normal.
IDDQD
This command makes you invincible. Repeat the code to revert to mortal.
IDKFA
This gives all weapons, full ammo, all the keys and 200 per cent armour.
IDCLEV
Warp to any level, eg <IDCLEV23> warps to episode 2, mission 3.
IDSPISPOPD
Lets you walk through walls. Type it again to turn it off.
IDCHOPPERS
Gives you the chainsaw.
IDMYPOS
Prints your current position co-ordinates.
IDBEHOLD
Type the code followed by any one of the following:
R Radiation suit
I Invisible for 60 seconds
V Invisible for 30 seconds
A Reveal the entire map. Areas not yet visited appear in grey
L Gives night goggles (two minutes duration)
S Beserker mode

SCREENSHOTS
To take screenshots type <DOOM - DEVPARM> at the DOS prompt. During play press <F1> and a PCX format file will be saved in the *Doom* directory.

Heroes Of Might And Magic

Using a hex editor on your save game, go to hex offset 16F. The contents here, and the other five at the end of the following blocks, correspond to the resources. Change them to FF.

The offset for money is at 187; change the value to A0 25 26 for maximum cash.

Start off by building the fighter producing units, and recruit from them immediately. Next build the well, the tavern and the magic guild. Buy fighters whenever they are available. Find out which are the most effective fighting units and give those to your hero, leaving the rest in the garrison.

Return frequently to your garrison to pick up more fighters and leave your least effective troops; also visit the magic guild to renew your spells. Remember that although troops are not available at the end of each turn, structures can and should be built.

You must acquire villages or castles as soon as possible and build them up to produce more fighters. When your hero is well-equipped with troops and sufficient numbers are being produced in other villages, you can hire another hero and widen your activities. Remember not to leave your bases unprotected.

Finally, when you've uncovered all the puzzles in each scenario, don't forget to dig in the spot marked 'x'.

Desert Strike

Go to the options screen and type <WATERFALLS>, then return to the game and press <F12>. To skip a level, take off, press <Q> and then land.

Gabriel Knight 2: The Beast Within

SPOILER

Part Two

This month we complete our walk through the Black Forest with nothing to aid us but a noble heart and a pocketful of silver bullets. Read on to find out how to get Gabriel and Grace through this adventure in one piece...

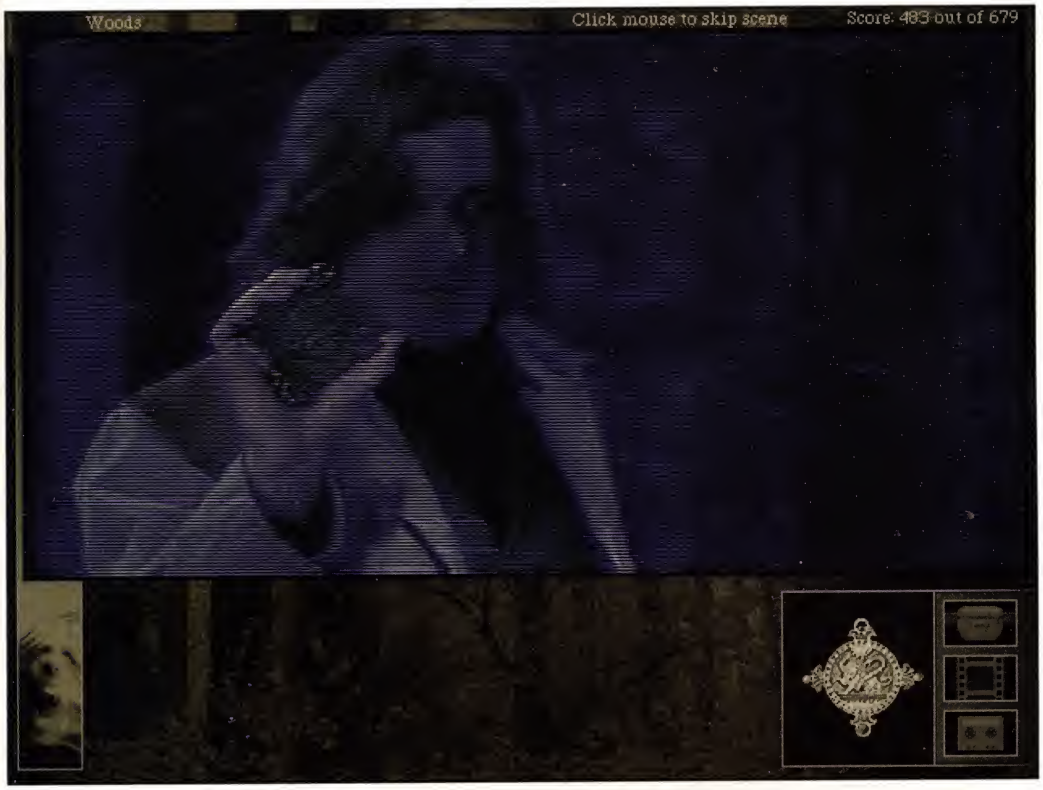
(Below) Game over man!

Chapter 5

Go to Marienplatz and walk left to the sausage shop. Click on the shopkeeper, then on the white sausage. Use your wallet to pay. Walk right to the Hunt Club. Click on one of the chairs in the main room then on the magazine to get your tape cassette. Go to Ubergrau's office and collect and read the letter from Grace.

Ask Ubergrau about missing persons, then use the Von Zell tape on him. Go to the police station and talk to Leber about everything. Click the Von Zell tape on him. Click on the desk, then on the ledger in the close-up. Take the train to Buchenau and talk to the man behind the door. Return to Ubergrau's office, ask him about cash, then go back to Buchenau. Give him the cash and get as much information out of him as you can by asking him questions. Move down the screen and click on the last cage on the right. Now click on the straw in the lower-right portion of the cage. Use the sausage on the tiger. Pick up the wolf tags from the straw. Go back to the Hunt Club where you'll be taken off to the hunting lodge.

THE TRUEPLAYERS™



Hunting Lodge

Enter the hallway and then the second door from the front on the left-hand side of the hall. Speak to Von Aigner to find out what he knows. Leave and then enter the third door from the front on the right-hand side of the hall. Open the wardrobe and get the black rope. Open the window and look down to see the ledge below. Use the rope on the ledge. Move to the middle window and enter Von Zell's room. Find the appointment book and examine it. Click on the piece of paper tucked behind the pages. Read the letter. Enter the bathroom and click on the rug for a close-up. Examine the edge of the footprint, then click on the revealed footprint. Leave the room via the window and go back the way you came. Return to the hall and then go downstairs to the Great Room. Open the wardrobe and get the lantern. Talk to Hennemann.

Go back upstairs and enter Klingmann's room, which is the bottom-left door. Use the wolf tags on him. Go back downstairs and get the matches from above the fireplace. Leave the building and enter the stable. Click on the tool rack on the right and then pick up the shears. Leave the stable and move right. Click on the bare patch of ground to find and examine the paw print. Exit close-up and go right again. Go down two screens. Examine the muddy patch to discover yet another paw print.

Now use the shears on the hedge to uncover the entrance to a cave. Move through the entrance on the left of the back wall into the darkened area. Look around until you find the pit, then use the matches and the lantern to find out the exact source of the nasty noises. Move 'up' twice, then go left twice to get back to the lodge. Go upstairs and enter the door to the bottom-right. Talk to Von Glower about what you've seen. Save your game at this point, as you will be reloading!

Go north then return. Use the Ritter talisman on the werewolf and it will back off. Quickly follow the wolf and repeat the trick with the talisman. You must use the talisman to force the wolf off each screen while you pursue it until you finally reach the ravine area – but don't follow it to the south in the first few screens or you'll die; just wait until the beast returns, then force it away again in a different direction. Eventually Von Glower will appear and throw you a gun. Use the gun on the wolf.

(Above) Only the ancient talisman has the power to drive back the forces of darkness, so keep it handy.

(Below) Hidden within Altotting church is the secret of the opera house. Unfortunately the secret you are searching for won't be revealed merely because you have a heart of 'gold'.

Chapter 6

Move down and examine Gabriel. Exit from the dungeon and go to the post office. Read the letter from Von Glower. Go to the Gasthof and pinch a roll from the basket on the table. Talk to Mrs Smith about everything. Return to the castle bedroom and pick up a pillowcase from the bed. Go back to the dungeon. Use the bread roll and the pillowcase to capture the pigeon. Go to Altotting and enter the church. Examine the display case on the wall and read the sign. Move right and enter the priest's office. Use your purse on the basket with the water to get a bottle. Drive to Neuschwanstein Castle and go to the living room. Move down one screen then return to see the badly-behaved child. Wait until the guard has gone, then click on the chair.

Click the bottle of water on the chair. While the guard is busy trying to clean

(Top) By using your opera glasses you'll be able to identify the handsome couple sitting in the special opera box.

(Above) Somewhere in the opera house there's a special seat – your job is to identify it.

things up you can go up and left into the bedroom. Examine the lower section of the wall behind where the guard normally stands to find a secret panel containing a scroll. Go to the grotto and examine the wall on the left to locate another concealed scroll. Go to the singer's hall then exit down to the far end of the hall. Use the pigeon on the doorway to the left, which will release it and bring the guard. Go back to the top end of the hall and look again at the wolf painting. Examine the wall behind where the guard was standing to find the third concealed manuscript.

Return to the crypt at St Georg's church. Click on Wolfgang's coffin, then on the lid, then on the silver heart. Go back to Schloss Ritter and talk to Gerde about the silver heart. Go back to St Georg's and take the silver heart.

Drive back to Altotting and talk to the priest. Use the silver heart on him and you'll be taken to the shrine. Examine the display case on the right-hand side of the room, and the doorway further to the right. Use the silver heart on the basket on the right-hand side of the altar. Move right and open the doors, allowing the wind to blow out all the candles. Use the chair beside the display case then select the bottom-left urn to get Ludwig's diagram. You will now be whisked off to see Georg, and to give him the opera.

Click on the table to get a programme, then examine the opera poster. Exit 'down', then right, and right again. Go to the door at the end of the hall and enter the office. Examine the bulletin board and pick up the seating chart. Take the opera glasses and the 'To do' list. Read the list. Talk to Gabriel. Leave the office then go down and into the auditorium through the large open doors. Talk to Georg, then talk to the chandelier man. Look at the theatre diagram in your inventory. Click on the 'x'. Look at the seating chart and point to the spot where the 'x' was. Go out of the auditorium, back to the opera poster, up the open stairs, and click on the double doors to enter the Mittelloge.

Exit back to the hallway and move right, then go to the door at the end of the hall. Look through the small window into the auditorium. Turn on the spotlight then click on the handle to move it. Move the beam until it's shining exactly over the Mittelloge. Go back to the foyer and use the seating chart on the usher. Go right and through the door with the steps leading up. Get the rope from the back wall. Go downstairs to the basement. Move right, then open the panel to get the keys.

Go left, then down. Click on the left door to find the prop room. Go left, pick up the 'PRIVAT' sign, then go back through the door you entered and lock it with the keys. Go right three times, then down twice to find the furnace room.

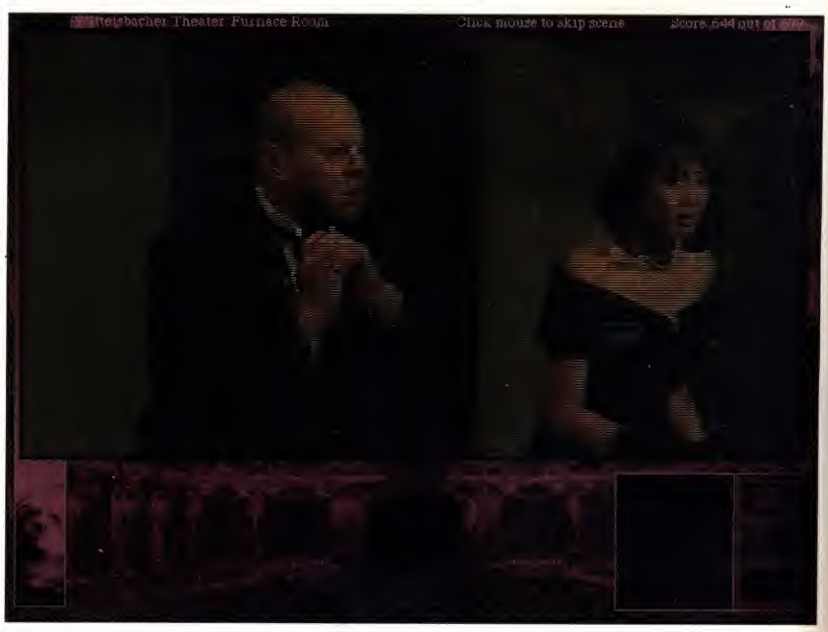
Open the furnace door. Use the coal in the bin on the right to shovel some in. Click on the furnace controls, first on the 'Automatisch' button, then on the handle. Turn the handle all the way to 'hoch'. Go left through the door, then right into the foyer. Return to the office and examine Gabriel. Wear the evening dress then return to the spotlight room. Look through the little window, then use the opera glasses on Mittelloge. Go upstairs to the central hallway, click on Mittelloge doors. Lock the doors using the rope on the handles, then put the 'PRIVAT' sign on as well.

With Gabriel back in charge move left, then move the chest aside to reveal an air vent. Use the dagger to remove the vent. Climb inside the open vent and travel north, north, then west to appear backstage. Click on the right-hand side of the back wall to find a reel of sticky tape. Go through the right-hand door into the dressing room. Wear the minstrel costume from the clothes rack. Examine the dressing table. Click on the face powder. Quickly click on the dressing table again and use the powder on the mirror. Exit close-up, and quickly hide behind the changing screen before Englehart appears. Use the tape on Englehart to tie him up. You are now transformed into a wolf and so is Von Glower. Save your game position.

The trick now is to close off the doors in the basement to prevent the black wolf escaping. You can close the doors, but you can't open them again. However, by closing the correct doors you can force Von Glower into the furnace room where he can be destroyed.

Turn right. Go forward twice. Turn left twice, and close the door. Turn right, go forward. Turn left twice, close the door. Turn right twice, then forward twice. Turn left twice, close the door. Turn right, go forward. Turn left, close the door. Turn right, forward once. Turn left, go forward once. Turn left again, go forward once. Turn left twice, close the door. Turn left, close the door. Turn left, go forward, turn left twice, close the door. Turn left, go forward. Turn right, go forward, close the door in front of you. Turn left, go forward, turn right, go forward. Turn right, go forward three times. Turn right, go forward twice. Save game.

Go forward into the furnace room. Click on Grace. Click on the furnace door to open it. Click on the grey wolf. Get ready for Von Glower to leap. When the black wolf crosses over the furnace, click on him to push him inside. **Z**



(Right) Make one wrong move in the furnace room and that fat guy with the gun is going to put a bloody great hole in your furry ass!

RIK MAYALL as Dick Tate MICHAEL NEILL as Bud Tucker

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BUYERS' GUIDE

Welcome to the all-singing, all-dancing *PC Zone* Buyers Guide, which is to gaming what the BR timetable is to trainspotters. You name it, it's here – painstakingly compiled by our very own engine driver.

Issue 13 – April 1994

Archon Ultra
(78) US Gold – Strategy £39.99
More beat 'em up than strategy.

Beneath A Steel Sky
(83: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Flight Sim £39.99
Graphically good and pleasingly puzzling jaunt that you'll feel like returning to.

Conspiracy
(67) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £44.99
Takes all the fun out of Ruskie bashing.

D-Day
(38) US Gold – Wargame £35.99
D-Day lies bleeding in the no man's land of wargames.

Daemonsgate
(45) Gametek – Role-Playing Game £29.99
Out-dated, tedious and visually vestigial.

Doom
(96: Classic) iD Software – Arcade £34.99
The best arcade game and also the best multi-player game ever. *Doom* is the best. Need we say more?

Hired Guns
(77) Psygnosis – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Ishar 2 with robots.

Hot Sound And Vision
(85: Recommended) Interplay – General Interest £44.99
An outstanding collection.

Interplay's 10 Year Anthology
(85: Recommended) Interplay – Compendium £49.99
A cost-effective way to build an instant library of classic games.

Micro Machines
(70) Codemasters – Arcade £29.99
A good two-player game (if you have a decent PC, that is).

Mortal Kombat
(80: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Beat 'Em Up £29.99
Not as good as the SNES *Street Fighter II*, but the best on the PC.

Nomad
(78) Gametek – Space Strategy £29.99
Good game if you're more into exploring than fighting.

Pinball Fantasies
(80: Recommended) 21st Century Entertainment – Pinball £37.95
The meanest machine of them all – a worthy successor to the original *Pinball Dreams*.

Reunion
(80: Recommended) Grandslam – Strategy £TBA
Reunion has something for everyone.

Sim City 2000
(92: Classic) Maxis – Strategy £39.99
Brilliant game that'll make you anally retentive in the extreme.

Star Trek: 25th Anniversary
(86: Recommended) Interplay – Adventure £49.99
A game boldly going where it's been before, just a little more vocally.

Strike Commander (CD)
(86: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £49.99
Superior flight sim, but you need the hardware to match.

The Complete UMS
(58) Mirage – Strategy £44.99
Both classics in their day, the two *UMS* games are a bit too long in the tooth to excite anyone but the real enthusiast.

The Lawnmower Man
(77) Sales Curve Interactive – Arcade £54.99
Excellently presented. Just a little more complexity in the gameplay and it would have been unreservedly recommended.

Winter Olympics
(64) US Gold – Sport £42.99
Has its moments, but you'll probably play it for a few hours and thereafter pick it up once a year if you get really bored.

Wizard
(73) Psygnosis – Role-Playing Game £44.99
A good stepping stone into the land of RPGs.

Issue 14 – May 1994

Air Transport Pilot (CD)
(70) RC Simulations – Simulation £79.95
Well, it's not really our idea of fun, but it's a reasonable effort for a simulation of this type.

Airlines
(20) Kompart (UK) Ltd – Strategy £39.99
Ugly, fiddly and totally boring.

Arena: The Elder Scrolls
(62) Bethesda Softworks – Role-Playing Game £45.99
Disappointing really.

Award Winner Gold Edition
(88: Recommended) Empire – Arcade £34.99
Superb quality games with unrivalled value for money. Buy it now!

Battle Isle 2
(91: Classic) Blue Byte – Strategy £54.99
Without a shadow of a doubt, this is *the* strategy game of the year.

Buzz Aldrin's Race Into Space (CD)
(95: Classic) Interplay – Strategy £39.99
A stunning improvement on an already classic game.

Cannon Fodder
(90: Classic) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Arcade/Strategy £34.99
Great fun for all the wrong and right reasons.

CD-ROM Challenge Pack
(75) Software Toolworks – Compendium £39.99
Reasonably good compilation, but there are better ones around.

Championship Manager For Windows
(79) Domark – Sport £29.99
A wasted opportunity. Not as good as the DOS version.

D/Generation
(85: Recommended) Mindscape – Adventure £19.99
Probably the best game that *Windows* users have ever played.

Excellent Games
(85: Recommended) Beau Jolly – Various £39.99
Great games at a great price. A compilation not to be missed, including *Populous 2*, *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker*, *Car And Driver* and *Robocod*.

Fantastic Dizzy
(50) Codemasters – Platform Game £9.99
What can we say? Wrong time. Wrong format. Wrong price.

Gabriel Knight (CD)
(90: Classic) Sierra On-Line – Adventure Game £44.99
Brooding, atmospheric thriller.

In Extremis
(67) US Gold – Arcade £37.99
You'll shriek! You'll shout! You'll yawn!

Johnny Quest
(12) Software Business – Arcade/Adventure £29.99
Can basically be summed up in one word – dreadful.

Megarace
(65) Mindscape – Racing £39.99
A superb demonstration of what can be done graphically with CD-ROM... and how easy it is for gameplay to suffer as a result.

Merchant Prince
(82: Recommended) Mirage – Strategy £44.99
Don't let the dodgy graphics fool you. If you give this game half a chance, we reckon you'll be hooked.

Microcosm
(70) Psygnosis – Shoot 'Em Up £49.99
Brilliant graphics and excellent sound. Let down by limited gameplay.

NFL Pro League Football
(50) Digital Integration – Sport £39.99
As a play-editor it's okay, but playing the game itself is disappointing.

Privateer: Righteous Fire
(80: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Add-On £19.99
Privateer fans definitely won't be disappointed with this one.

Seawolf
(83: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Simulation £44.99
A highly atmospheric sub sim with a control interface from hell.

Starlord
(70) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
It could have been excellent. Could have been. Damn!

The Patrician (CD)
(70) Daze Marketing – Strategy £39.99
A good game on disk, slightly better on CD.

The Red Crystal
(43) Mirage – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Don't ask your friends to play this if you want to keep them.

Unnecessary Roughness
(66) Accolade – Sport £39.99
Best described as 'all right'. It's as good as most American footy sims.

Issue 15 – June 1994

Bloodnet
(75) MicroProse – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Hindered by outdated implementation, but still well worth a look.

Carriers At War II
(63) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99
For die-hard strategy aficionados.

Darkseed
(90: Classic) Cyberdreams – Adventure £44.99
If you have a taste for the macabre, you'll never forget the *Darkseed* affair.

Diggers
(40) Millennium – Puzzle Game £34.99
Mind-numbingly tedious.

Disney Animation Studio
(75) Infogrames – General Interest £99.99
More serious approach with superb sample animations that you can't use!

Dragonsphere
(69) MicroProse – Adventure £39.99
A beautiful adventure game that won't tax your brain too heavily.

Evasive Action
(40) Mindscape – Simulation £34.99
Oh, so very close, but it's got more bugs than Watergate.

F1
(40) Domark – Sport £29.99
The champions of sport produce yet another world-beater.

Fleet Defender
(86: Recommended) MicroProse – Flight Sim £44.99
Heavyweight flight sim, both helped and hindered by over-clever graphics.

Hanna-Barbera Animation Workshop
(75) Empire – General Interest £49.99
Tries to make everything fun and encourages you to try out other methods of animation.

Hornet Naval Strike Fighter
(80: Recommended) Spectrum Holobyte – Flight Sim
As that well known saying goes: 'If you like *Falcon 3*, you'll just love *Hornet*.'

Myst
(67) Electronic Arts – Adventure £44.99
Surreal and atmospheric, if not realistic.

Pacific Strike
(80: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £49.99
Miles better than *Strike Commander* but requires a state-of-the-art ninja PC.

Pagan: Ultima VII
(78) Electronic Arts – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Without doubt a love/hate relationship for *Ultima* purists.

Ravenloft
(78) US Gold – Role-Playing Game £45.99
A playable and accessible RPG.

Red Hell
(60) Cyberdreams – Adventure £39.99
The graphics are poor and the control system is dire. Avoid it.

RedShift
(95: Classic) Maris Multimedia Ltd – General Interest £89.00
Stunning program which will be hard to beat.

Sabre Team
(60) Krisalis – Strategy £29.99
This has all been done before, and done much better as well.

Shadowcaster
(70) Electronic Arts – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Considerable enhancements for CD but the gameplay remains the same.

Spaceship Warlock
(70) Reactor/Ubisoft – Adventure £44.99
Very slick, very polished. The gameplay's a bit limited but it's fun all the same.

TFX
(80: Recommended) Ocean – Simulation £44.99
Great game with totally superfluous bells and whistles.

UFO Enemy Unknown
(93: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
Brilliantly designed, perfectly implemented and totally absorbing.

Washington DC Scenery
(85: Recommended) Supervision – Flight Sim Add-On £39.99
One of the best flight sim add-ons to date.

Issue 16 – July 1994

Castles II
(65) Interplay – Strategy £49.95
Interplay usually releases excellent games – this isn't one of them.

Comanche (CD)
(90: Classic) Optima – Flight Sim £49.99
Brilliant action-packed helicopter simulation at a great price on CD.

Companions Of Xanth (CD)
(84: Recommended) Accolade – Role-Playing Game £39.99
Great game on disk. Even better on CD.

Corridor 7
(55) Gametek – Arcade £19.99
Nothing new or exciting.

Detroit
(85: Recommended) Impressions – Strategy Game £39.99
An intriguing strategy/sim which boasts both originality and playability.

Dragon's Lair
(67) Elite Systems – Adventure £39.99
An interactive cartoon that's more 'cartoon' than 'interactive'.

Eye Of The Storm
(40) Rebellion – Space/Strategy £39.99
Very futuristic, very *Elite* and very, very crap.

Great Naval Battles 2
(86: Recommended) US Gold – Simulation £45.99
SSI cruises easily to the head of the fleet with this simply stunning sim.

Hand Of Fate (CD)
(78) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £49.99
Good game, shame about the conversion. In this case, more equals less.

Jack Nicklaus Signature Edition
(85: Recommended) Accolade – Sport £19.99
A good golf game at an amazing price.

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker
(80: Recommended) Hit Squad – Sport £14.99
Dangerously addictive snooker sim.

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(Left) *X-Wing:* groove on down to the old 'destroy the Death Star, save the croissant-haired princess' tune.

Lucky's Casino Adventure
(60) Mirage – Card Game £44.99
Challenging, fun, totally addictive but a bit pricey.
Lure Of The Temptress
(55) Hit Squad – Adventure £14.99
Old and fading.
Power Game 2 (CD)
(70) Activision – Simulation £29.99
Worth looking at if you don't have the hardware to run the latest sim.
Robinson's Requiem
(85: Recommended) Daze Marketing – RPG £39.99
Highly original, addictive 'survival sim' which, unfortunately, has some annoying bits.
Sam And Max Hit The Road
(93: Classic) US Gold – Adventure £45.99
Brilliantly original, a highly humourous jaunt.
Sim City Classic
(70) Hit Squad – Strategy £16.99
Still a great game but check out *Sim City 2000* first.
Sim City Enhanced
(82: Recommended) Interplay – Strategy £49.99
Sim City's an excellent game but 50 quid is a bit steep for a few enhancements.
Sleepwalker
(45) Hit Squad – Platform Game £9.99
Third-rate platformer. Stay well away from it.
Space Hulk
(87: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Strategy £39.99
Still a tremendous game, but not as good as the disk-based version.
Summer Challenge & Winter Challenge
(80: Recommended) Accolade – Sport £19.99
Good compilation, great value.
The Horde
(87: Recommended) US Gold – Strategy/Arcade Game £44.99
Not an original concept but extremely well implemented.
The Rock 'n' Roll Years – The '50s
(70) Supervision – General Interest £24.99
Handy for 50's music lovers or as a reference – but we doubt if it'll get you rockin' round the clock.
The Settlers
(89: Recommended) Blue Byte – Strategy £39.99
A damn fine, engrossing game.
Theatre Of War
(70) Hit Squad – Strategy £12.99
Excellent strategy game and it looks cool, too.
UFO
(93: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
Our Chris's favourite, this is an incredibly addictive strategy game.
Wembley Rugby League
(66) Audiogenic – Sport £29.99
This manages to be quite an improvement on previous rugby games.
Wolfpack
(60) Optima – Strategy £29.99
Disappointingly average.
World Cup Challenge
(48) Winsport – Sport £29.95
Disappointing, absurdly RAM-hungry and limited in its playing life.

Issue 17 – August 1994

1942: Pacific Air War
(89: Recommended) MicroProse – Flight Sim £44.99
Two great games – *Carrier Battles* and *Task Force 1942* – in one package. It's a winner!
Al Quadim: The Genie's Curse
(40) US Gold/SSI – Role-Playing Game £35.99
The thinking amoeba's beat 'em up.
Burntime
(43) Max Design – Strategy £39.99
Hey, it's just like being there.
Cool Spot
(80: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Platform Game £29.99
Charm and accessibility save it from being strictly seventies-up!
Delta V
(64) Bethesda Softworks – Shoot 'Em Up £45.99
Very fast and pretty stunning to look at, but it won't keep you up into the night.
Dinosaur Detective Agency
(42) Alternative Software – Platform Game £16.99
Cheap – but that's no reason to be cheerful.
Empire Soccer
(57) Empire – Sport £29.99
Let down by small viewing area, unintelligent player reactions and poor scrolling.
Good To Firm
(50) New Era Software – Sport £29.99
Horse-racing fanatics might get something out of it, but the experience will pall.
International Tennis Open
(88: Recommended) Philips Interactive Media – Sport £44.99
Definitely the new number one seed in the field of PC tennis simulations.
Jack Nicklaus (CD)
(78) Accolade – Sport £16.99
A perfectly serviceable golf game with a good course editor tacked on. Wait for me while I put my golfing shoes on...
Newsweek 3 Globocop (CD)
(0) Mindscape – General Interest £39.99
The most expensive beer mat in the world.
Overlord
(85: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Simulation £39.99
An old idea made new with some interesting tweaks.
Pinball Dreams 2
(70) 21st Century Entertainment – Pinball £19.99
Not bad at all. There's plenty for pinball wizards to get their flippers into.
Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye
(88: Recommended) Activision – Puzzle Game £29.99
Puzzles galore in this excellent addition to the rather mediocre range of games currently available for Windows.
Sherlock Holmes – The Case Of The Serrated Scalpel
(48) Electronic Arts – Adventure £49.99
Elementary, my dear Watson... and that's the problem.
Simon The Sorcerer (CD)
(89: Recommended) Adventuresoft UK Ltd – Adventure £44.99
A tricky adventure jaunt boosted by excellent talkie bits.
Syndicate (CD)
(92: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £39.99
What a game. What a barg.
Tactical Manager
(75) Black Legend – Sport £34.99
An interesting little number with the odd weakness, but several nice ideas.
Theme Park
(93: Classic) Electronic Arts – Strategy £44.99
A highly inventive 'business' sim that's fun, fun, fun. Hip hip hoorah for Bullfrog!
Walls Of Rome
(74) Digital Integration – Strategy £16.99
Good, if thin, fun.
World Cup USA '94
(78) US Gold – Sport £32.99
Good features; difference of opinion over the gameplay.
Zool 2
(82: Recommended) Millennium – Platform £34.99
As they say, if you liked *Zool*, you'll love this.

Issue 18 – September 1994

Beneath A Steel Sky (CD)
(72) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Adventure £39.99
Comic book-style adventure with excellently funny dialogue but lacking any real depth.
D-Day
(40) Impressions – Wargame £39.99
A sluggish, unrealistic and bug-ridden attempt at a wargame without many redeeming features.
FIFA International Soccer
(70) Electronic Arts – Sport £39.99
Looks and sounds great, but lacks gameplay.
Harpoon II
(70) Electronic Arts – Simulation £44.99
Massive, embarrassingly serious sim. Superb detail, occasionally nail-biting, always slooooow.
Inherit The Earth – Quest For The Orb
(72) US Gold – Adventure £39.99
A well-thought out gentle little brainteaser for those who fancy a 'sensible' game.
International Sensible Soccer
(78) Renegade – Sport £19.99
One of the best on the PC, but still not up to the Amiga version.
Litil Divil (CD)
(88: Recommended) Gremlin Graphics – Adventure £34.99
Excellent, original and addictive.
Metal And Lace: The Battle Of The Robo Babes
(35) Megatech – Beat 'Em Up £39.99
Totally devoid of any entertainment value whatsoever.
On The Ball
(68) Ascon – Sport £34.99
Too many frills, not enough body.
Outpost
(84: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Strategy £49.99
A superb game. Addictive if you've got the hardware, hell if you haven't.
Shadow Of The Comet (CD)
(88: Recommended) Infogrames – Adventure £39.99
A worthwhile reworking of a great game, but still very idiosyncratic.
Soccer Kid
(30) Krisalis – Platform Game £29.99
If you want happening platform action, then buy something else.
Theatre Of Death
(35) Psygnosis – Arcade/Strategy £34.99
Below average imitation of an above-average game.
TIE Fighter
(94: Classic) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Space Sim £49.99
Sheer, undiluted quality. Go out and treat yourself to a copy.

Issue 19 – October 1994

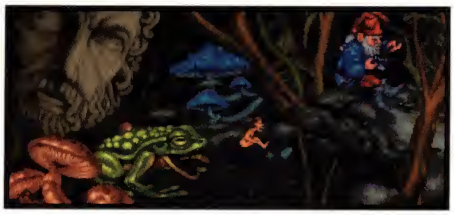
74 Wargame Construction Set 2: Tanks!
(90: Classic) SSI – Wargame £39.99
Never mind the 50-ton tanks – this is 50-tons of solid, fire-belching wargame. Absolutely brilliant.
Battle Bugs
(65) Dynamix – Strategy £TBA
A battle game with bugs in it (as opposed to a bugged battle game).
Dark Legions
(85: Recommended) SSI – Strategy £35.99
Wonderfully entertaining animations and game screens with hidden strategic depths.
Heimdall 2
(45) Core – Adventure £39.99
Great game, shame you can't play it.
Hell Cab
(50) Time Warner – Adventure £49.99
It's the same old story. Great graphics, but sadly lacking in gameplay.
IndyCar Racing Expansion Pack
(94: Recommended) Virgin Interactive Entertainment – Driving £17.99
These tracks are better than the original tracks (if you pretend Phoenix doesn't exist).
Ishar III: The Seven Gates Of Infinity
(50) Simarils – Strategy £39.99
Sum up *Ishar III* in one word? Avoid. Simple as that. The worst of a bunch.
KGB
(65) Hit Squad – Adventure £14.99
Bargain? Maybe. Boring? Definitely.
Kick Off 3
(55) Anco – Sport £29.99
Nice features, but gameplay isn't up to much.
Manchester United Premier League Champions
(60) Krisalis – Sport £29.99
Sensi revisited (although not as good) with a lot of features thrown in.
Planet Football
(68) Infogrames – Sport £39.99
The World Cup produced a rash of rush releases. This is not one of the best.
Police Quest IV – Open Season
(80: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Adventure £44.99
Atmospheric and very entertaining. A bit of a let down at the end, though.
Summer Challenge
(73) Hit Squad – Sport £12.99
Not a bad game by sports sim standards and easy to cheat at, but do you really want another sport sim?
Under A Killing Moon (CD)
US Gold – Adventure £59.99
Pigs can fly. Interactive movies do exist. Sort of.
Wing Commander: Armada
(76) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £44.99
Lots of good ideas stuck together but somehow it doesn't hang quite right.

Issue 20 – November 1994

Alien Legacy
(80: Recommended) Sierra On-Line – Strategy Game £39.99
Space strategy thing which is a bit like *Outpost* without the pretty bits. Daunting at first, but ultimately very rewarding.
Chaos Engine
(80: Recommended) Renegade – Arcade £32.99
A damned good, multi-direction scrolling, shooty thing with lots of big guns and silly characters.
Colonization
(90: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
Try to imagine *Civilization* with more depth and better graphics. Well done... you've just imagined *Colonization*.
Cyclemania (CD)
(83: Recommended) Accolade – Arcade Game £39.99
Extremely competent *Road Rash* 3DO rip-off with lovely digitised backdrops and big motorbikes.
Desert Strike
(78) Gremlin – Arcade £34.99
Conversion of the Mega Drive classic, isometric helicopter, blast 'em up game. The graphics are a bit crap but it's immensely playable.
Doom II
(90: Classic) Virgin Interactive – Arcade Game £49.99
The sequel to one of the best games ever. New graphics, a new gun and brand new monstie-wonsties. Miss it at your peril.
Inferno (CD)
(88: Recommended) Ocean – Space/Sim £44.99
Eagerly awaited game from DID. Lots of big space ships and silly looking aliens. One of the better space combat games.
KA-50 Hokum
(85: Recommended) Virgin – Simulation £39.99
Without a doubt the very best helicopter sim money can buy. Something for the propeller heads (yes, we know you're out there)...
NHL Hockey 95 (CD)
(91: Classic) EA – Sports/Arcade £34.99
A new version of the top-down scrolly, ice hockey game. Basically the same as the original (reviewed issue seven) but with new stats.
PGA 486 (CD)
(91: Classic) Electronic Arts – Sports £44.99
Gorgeous looking, solid playing, tasty little golf game. One of the best on the PC so far.
Pinball Dreams CD
(70) 21st Century – Arcade £39.99
Eight wonderfully designed, smoothly scrolling pinball tables. Why's it on CD? 'Cause there are lots of pointless rendered bits, that's why.
System Shock
(95: Classic) EA/Origin – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Pant-wettingly fantastic, cyberpunk, RPG thing. All hail *System Shock*, that shalt be king hereafter (at least until *System Shock II* comes out, that is).

Issue 21 – December 1994

Alone In The Dark 2 CD
(93: Classic) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99
A sequel that is noticeably better than the original and comes with some serious CD enhancements. What a refreshing change.
Dawn Patrol
(80: Recommended) Empire – Flight Sim £44.99
A gorgeous looking SVGA WWI flight sim with a bit of a different idea behind it... it's an interactive book, apparently.
Dreamweb
(74) Empire – Role-Playing Game £44.99
Cyberpunk RPG with lots of violence and a shagging scene that has now become infamous. »



(Left) *Simon The Sorcerer:* at last, an adventure game with a sense of humour – albeit a bit Pratchett-esque.

Ecstatica
(93: Classic) Psygnosis – Adventure £44.99
An utterly brilliant *Alone in the Dark*-alike with ellipsoid-generated characters and lots of pert buttocks.

FIFA CD
(76) Electronic Arts – Sports £39.99
A smart-looking footy game that just falls short of being an absolute belter.

Little Big Adventure
(93: Classic) Electronic Arts – Adventure Game £44.99
A truly amazing adventure with pretty graphics and weird French gameplay. Gobsmacking.

Magic Carpet
(96: Classic) Electronic Arts – Shoot 'Em Up £44.99
Bloody excellent shoot 'em up – looks brilliant, totally addictive. A must-have.

Project X
(76) Team 17 – Shoot 'Em Up £19.99
A very competent and nicely low-priced little shoot 'em up.

Rise Of The Robots
(88: Recommended) Mirage – Beat 'Em Up £44.99
Possibly the best beat 'em up on the PC so far with some excellent rendered sprites.

Space Simulator
(75) Microsoft – Simulator £39.99
A huge simulation of man's quest for space that is just a little too ambitious for its own good.

Star Crusader
(60) Gametek – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Basically this is a poor man's *Wing Commander* with some nice CD bits.

Transport Tycoon
(94: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
One of the best strategy games around and a more than worthy sequel to *Railroad Tycoon*.

Total Carnage
(74) ICE – Shoot 'Em Up £27.99
Good challenging fun and a more than competent conversion of the original arcade machine.

Issue 22 – January 1995

Aces Of The Deep
(90: Classic) Dynamix/Sierra – Naval Sim £39.99
Graphics, gameplay, sound and atmo combine to make this the best sub game available.

All New World Of Lemmings
(78) Digital Integration – Puzzle Game £39.99
If you like all the other *Lemmings* games, you'll like this one, too.

Armored Fist (CD)
(86: Recommended) US Gold/Novalogic – Simulation £44.99
Commanche on wheels. Er, tracks. You know what we mean.

Creature Shock
(78) Virgin – Adventure Game £49.99
An engrossing, atmospheric 3D adventure game. Great graphics, absorbing levels, but lousy soundtrack.

Cyberwar
(55) SCI – Arcade Adventure £49.99
It looks amazing. The gameplay isn't.

Dark Sun II
(80: Recommended) Mindscape – RPG £44.99
Love it for its brains, not for its looks.

Discworld
(96: Classic) Psygnosis – Adventure Game £49.99
Discworld is possibly the best point-and-click adventure game ever made.

Front Page Sports Baseball
(85: Recommended) Sierra – Sport £44.99
It takes all the best bits from all the best games and ends up being the best.

Klik 'n' Play
(88: Recommended) Europress – Game Designer for Windows £39.99
Neat intuitive, and loads of fun.

Novastorm
(40) Psygnosis – Shoot 'Em Up £44.99
Repeat ad nauseam: 'Pretty graphics doth not a game make.'

Power Drive
(50) US Gold – Racing Game £39.99
Knock off 30 whole points for no two-player mode. Sod off *Power Drive*.

Quarantine
(80: Recommended) Gametek – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
An excellent blast and it looks good, too.

Retribution
(45) Gremlin Interactive – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Not only is it a below average shoot 'em up, it has pretensions too.

US Navy Fighters
(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £44.99
If it had a multi-player facility, we would've given it 100. But it hasn't, so we won't.

Warcraft
(75) Interplay – Strategy £39.99
Good, simple, addictive strategy game.

Issue 23 – February 1995

Alone In The Dark 3
(95: Classic) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99
The mega-stonkingly weird and wonderful final chapter in the *Alone In The Dark* trilogy.

Cannon Fodder 2
(74) Virgin Interactive – Arcade/Strategy £34.99
Just more of the same, or is *Cannon Fodder 2* a significant improvement? Sensible returns with more 'fun with a gun'.

Commander Blood
(81: Recommended) Mindscape – Adventure Game £44.99
It's French, and guess what? It's weird. Very weird. We try not to get at them for it... but this is just plain mad.

Cyberia
(80: Recommended) Interplay – Adventure/Shoot 'Em Up £49.99
A contender for the 'Best-looking game of 1994' award. Tastier than treacle pudding with lashings of thick custard, and almost certainly better than *Rebel Assault*.

Dragon Lore
(81: Recommended) Mindscape – Adventure £44.99
Cryo's epic multi-CD graphic adventure finally arrives. Is it just more French weirdness or is it actually a decent game?

Hammer Of The Gods
(77) US Gold – Strategy £TBA
Nordic domination and general Euro-bashing in this simple but addictive strategy war sim from New World Computing.

Kyrandia 3
(87: Recommended) Virgin – Adventure £44.99
Westwood's *Fables and Fiends* series makes it to number three, and this time you get to play the bad guy!

Lion King
(71) Virgin – Platform Game £29.99
The smash-hit movie turns into a reasonable-platform game. *PC Zone* good tip number one – just pretend your PC is a Mega Drive.

NASCAR Racing
(84: Recommended) Virgin – Racing Sim £44.99
Papyrus follows up *IndyCar* with the popular American sport of driving round in circles.

Noctropolis
(79) Electronic Arts – Adventure £44.99
For a change EA goes all weird, gothic and horrific in this unusual super-hero adventure.

Ultimate Body Blows
(78) Team 17 – Beat 'Em Up £29.99
An Amiga conversion from Team 17. But don't be put off by that – it's actually quite good.

Voyeur
(40) Interplay – Adventure £39.99
Not as pervy as you might think. Yes, there are suspenders and brassieres in it, but don't buy it hoping for nudity or naughtiness 'cos you won't find any (er well, not much, at least not enough to satisfy the male staff on *PC Zone*).

Wing Commander III
(62) Electronic Arts – Flight Simulation £59.99
Four million dollars, Luke Skywalker and a well-known porn actress – a potentially interesting situation, if ever there was one.

Issue 24 – March 1995

Aladdin
(70) Virgin – Arcade £29.99
He leaps tall buildings, cuts through baddies with his scimitar and wears pointy slippers. He's Aladdin – who else?

Dark Forces
(95: Classic) LucasArts/Virgin – Action Adventure £54.99
The empire is finally *Doom*-ed, but is it better than the real thing? We bring you the first review of the game everyone's itching to get their hands on, in a special world exclusive, courtesy of LucasArts and Virgin.

Doom Clones: Head To Head
(55) Merit – Action Adventure £39.99
We put Merit's *Dr Radiaki* up against Elite's *Virtuoso* and run for cover (well, *Doom*, actually).

Hell: A Cyberpunk Thriller
(25) Gametek – Adventure £39.99
It is: it isn't. If it's really this bad then start praying for forgiveness immediately.

Kick Off 3: European Challenge
(70) Anco – Sport £29.99
The last *Kick Off* was an absolute nightmare. Has Anco finally got it together in Europe?

King's Quest VII
(93: Classic) Sierra – Adventure £44.99
The latest point-and-click extravaganza from the Roberta Williams' school of mush-wushy, cutesy-wutesyness.

Knights Of Xentar
(10) Megatech – Adventure £49.99
A plentiful lack of beat 'em up action strides onto the PC, courtesy of Megatech. Ouch!

Menzoberanzan
(68) Mindscape – Role-Playing Game £TBA
Not a tasty lozenge that promises to clear your stuffy nose and soothe your sore throat, but a rather ordinary role-playing game.

Metaltech: Earthsiege
(87: Recommended) Sierra – Simulation £39.99
Go stomping mad in this spectacular HERC-fest. Just one thing though, why have extravagant HERCS that walk when the terrain is flat?

Realms Of Arkania: Star Trail
(85: Recommended) US Gold – Role-Playing Game £44.99
The sequel to the keenly received *Blade Of Destiny* finally makes it onto CD-ROM. Hip, hip...

SuperKarts
(82: Recommended) Virgin – Action £TBA
The most fun you can have with your bum an inch off the ground, when wearing a crash helmet and clad in brightly-coloured leather.

TIE Fighter: Defender Of The Empire
(73) LucasArts – Space/Action £19.99
Two new missions and a new ship. What ever will they think of next?

Wings Of Glory
(78) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £TBA
Chocks away as Origin reach for the skies to do battle with the Hun, chaps with 'taches and every other WWI flight sim ever created.

Issue 25 – April 1995

BC Racers
(62) Core Design – Racing Sim £34.99
Best described as a kind of *Chuck Rock* meets *Super Mario Kart*. Unfortunately, the clash of these two mega-games hasn't proven to be that good. Oops.

Big Red Adventure
(70) Core Design – Adventure £39.99
This is the follow up to *Nippon Safes*... arrgh, keep it away! Hang on a minute, though, *Big Red Adventure* looks like it could be quite good.

Bioforge
(95: Classic) Electronic Arts – Action Adventure £44.99
The first 'real' interactive movie? Or is it just another game that looks like *Alone In The Dark*?

Descent
(94: Classic) Interplay – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £44.99
Could this be the game to finally knock *Doom* off the top spot? The fabulous 3D game from Interplay arrives at last.

Heretic
(78) iD/Raven – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
'*Doom*-in-tights.' Can a fighting fantasy version of the greatest game of all time, ever, ever, really be better? Er, no.

Iron Assault
(57) Virgin – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £34.99
A distinctly average 'big robot' game joins the ranks of other distinctly average 'big robot' games on the PC.

Legions
(65) Mindscape – Strategy Wargame £34.99
This is definitely one for the Hex-heads, this is. It's intense, ludicrously strategic and it runs under *Windows*. Eek!

Lost Eden
(76) Virgin – Adventure £34.99
Cryo's dinosaur game finally arrives a year after it was unveiled. It's a bit like *Jurassic Park* meets *Dragon Lore*.

Issue 26 – May 1995

Atari Action Pack
(50) Activision – VCS Atari Compilation £24.99
This compilation includes lots of really ancient Activision Atari VCS games, all for *Windows* and all on one CD. So what's it like? Well, it's like a time machine that takes you somewhere a bit crap!

Cyclones
(78) Mindscape – Adventure £44.99
Yet another *Doom* clone – but not a bad one by any means – from the team that brought us both *Heretic* and *Shadowcaster*.

Football Glory
(60) Kompart – Sports £TBA
Q: When is *Sensible Soccer* not really *Sensible Soccer*?
A: When it's a not-quite-so-good copy called *Football Glory*.

Guilty
(58) Psygnosis – Adventure £39.99
Sequel-ola, *Guilty* is the follow up to the awful *Innocent Until Caught*, and it's significantly better, but still not brilliant.

Jungle Strike
(79) Gremlin – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Another sequel... this time, the sequel to *Desert Strike*. But this shoot 'em up is bigger, more varied and harder than the original. Not bad at all.

NBA Live
(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – Sport £44.99
EA Sports awakens from a period of dormancy with this absolutely corking basketball arcade game – the best of its type around.

Renegade
(75) SSI – Space Sim £44.99
SSI's *TIE Fighter/Wing Commander* wannabe in glorious SVGA. A surprisingly playable space warfare game.

Rise Of The Triad
(82: Classic) US Gold and PD Selections – Adventure £39.95
Some love it and some hate it... but of the *Doom*-alikes, this is one of the best.

Super Frog
(40) Team 17 – Platform £19.99
A platform game with a frog in it... Uh-huh. Okay.

Tank Commander
(60) Domark – Simulation £39.99
A budget-style tank game at full price. If you've got more money than sense, you'll really love it!

Woodruff and the Schnibble of Azimuth
(75) Sierra – Adventure £39.99
A weird adventure game from Sierra. A wonderfully deceptive adventure with comic-book feel!

X-COM
(94 Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
The first *X-COM* was absolutely brilliant. This sequel is even better still.

Issue 27 – June 1995

Blind Date
(25) Domark – Adventure £39.99
Chris had a jolly splendid time reviewing last month's 'interactive-try-to-get-laid-simulator'. What will the softies come up with next?

Full Throttle
(92: Classic) LucasArts/Virgin – Adventure £49.99
Hooray for LucasArts adventures. Big, tough guy biker stuff this time. Splendid.

Flight Of The Amazon Queen
(50) Warner Interactive – Adventure £39.99
This tries desperately to be a LucasArts adventure but fails quite miserably. Sorry, it's naff.

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**WINDOWS 95

(Right) *IndyCar Racing:* great graphics and playability make this the best ever driving game.

(Far right) *Sam & Max:* The clue's inside the cat. Rip its head off! (Sick, or what?)

Hardball 4
(83: Recommended) Accolade/Warner – Arcade/Sports £39.99
Returning May's theme of 'sequels', Warner Interactive brings us the fourth *Hardball*. Surely Warner have to call it quits now?

High Seas Trader
(62) Impressions – Strategy/Simulation Game £39.99
Affectionately referred to as 'High Street Trader' in the *PC Zone* office, this is the latest strategy offering from Impressions.

Magic Carpet: Hidden Worlds
(80: Recommended) Bullfrog – Arcade/Strategy £19.99
A sort of add-on thingy for *Magic Carpet* with lots of snow. The trouble is though, it's completely and utterly, stupidly, bloody hard.

PyroTechnica
(69) Psygnosis – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £29.99
A very poor *Descent*-wannabe from Psygnosis. Fortunately though, it's considerably cheaper.

Psycho Pinball
(78) Codemasters – Arcade £44.99
Pinball from Codemasters. Some nice tables. Some nice music. Sorted.

Slipstream 5000
(88: Recommended) Gremlin Interactive – Arcade/Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Slipstream is a three-dimensional-fabby-whizzo racing/shooting/speedy thing from Gremlin. Splendid stuff, and better than boring, run-of-the-mill racing games.

Star Trek: TNG – "A Final Unity"
(94: Classic) MicroProse – Adventure £49.99
Yes, it may have a ridiculously long title, but this is, without a doubt, the best game to bear the *Star Trek* name so far.

Super Streetfighter II Turbo
(90: Classic) Gametek – Beat 'Em Up £39.99
SSFII Turbo is one of the best arcade conversions ever seen on the PC.

Ticonderoga
(78) Mindscape – Naval/Strategy £44.99
Silly name but a damn fine naval strategy game. Lovely graphics and splendid CD bits.

Virtua Chess
(85: Recommended) Titus – Strategy £44.99
Snazzy 3D SVGA chess thingy from Titus, France. This one's different looking and with a ninja bastard brainbox.

Warriors
(85: Recommended) Mindscape – Beat 'Em Up £39.99
What, yet another beat 'em up? Anyone would think there's a shortage of 'em or something.

Issue 28 – July 1995

1830
(68) US Gold – Board Game £39.99
Set in the early years of American colonisation, a sort of *Railroad Tycoon* meets *Risk*. Strictly for those of trainspotter persuasion.

Alex Dampier Pro Hockey
(66) Merit Software – Sports Sim £39.95
Ice hockey sim with *FIFA*-style viewpoint, but impossible control system, and comes no where near *NHL Hockey '95*.

Alien Breed: Tower Assault
(81) Team 17 – Shoot 'Em Up £29.99
The sequel to *Alien Breed*, but superior to the PC version of the original. Great graphics and frenzied, addictive shooty action.

Brett Hull Hockey '95
(73) Accolade/Warner – Sports Simulation £39.99
Top-down ice hockey game, which doesn't match the king of ice hockey sims, *NHL Hockey '95*, but betters *Alex Dampier Pro Hockey '95*.

Chaos Control
(40) Philips/Infogrames – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Unbelievably terrible futuristic FMV shoot 'em up that was passable on CD-i, but should never have seen the light of day on PC.

Command & Conquer
(95: Classic) Virgin – Strategy Adventure £44.99
Dune 2 meets *Cannon Fodder* in this brilliant game of soldiers. It's without doubt one of the best of its genre around right now.

Daedalus Encounter
(58) Virgin – Adventure £44.95
Interactive movie game that fails to make the grade – and, for what it's worth, stars Tia Carrere, the babe from *Wayne's World*.

Dominus
(42) US Gold – Strategy Game £39.99
Fantasy battle game with good graphics and comprehensive interface but lacking that vital ingredient – gameplay.

Frontier: First Encounters
(78) Gametek – Space Strategy Simulation £39.99
Disappointing enhanced version of *Elite II*, which is also bugged to jiggery.

Jagged Alliance
(72) Mindscape – Strategy Game £39.99
Risk meets *Syndicate* in this strategy battle jaunt. It's not groundbreaking or particularly original but quite good fun all the same.

Loadstar
(35) BMG Interactive – Shoot 'Em Up £34.99
Dreadful FMV shoot 'em up not worth the paper its manual was printed on.

Machiavelli The Prince
(89) MicroProse – Strategy Game £44.99
Colonization-style sim packed with political intrigue, assassinations, plagues, pirates and a unique play by e-mail feature.

Man Utd: The Double
(71) Krisalis – Sports Sim £29.99
The best *Manchester United* game yet, but it's still not a patch on the excellent *Sensible Soccer*s of this world.

Sim Tower
(70) Maxis – Strategy Game £39.99
Basically *Sim City* viewed from the side with the emphasis on tower blocks, but not as addictive – and the presentation is dire.

Virtual Pool
(91: Classic) Interplay – Sports Sim £44.99
Superb gameplay and 3D graphics, complete with a multi-player network option. This is about as close to a real game of pool as you can possibly get.

Issue 29 – August 1995

Civil War
(83: Recommended) Empire – Strategy Game £44.99
The sequel to *Fields Of Glory*, and jolly nice it looks too.

FX Fighters
(93: Classic) Philips/GTE – Beat 'Em Up £39.99
The closest thing to *Virtua Fighter* on the PC, and by far the best beat 'em up you can buy. We love it!

Hi-Octane
(83: Recommended) Bullfrog/Electronic Arts – Racing Game £39.99
Bullfrog surprises everyone by releasing a racing game, and surprises everyone even more by not saying anything about it until it's nearly finished. Hmm.

Micro Machines 2
(92: Classic) Codemasters – Racing Game £44.99
A brilliant, simple and effective racing game with a rather nifty little track designer thrown in for good measure.

Orion Conspiracy
(36) Domark – Adventure Game £39.99
Domark unveils what has to be the worst-scripted computer game ever conceived.

Perfect General 2
(82: Recommended) Mirage Software – Strategy Wargame £44.99
Hex-tastic strategy game for those of you who really like your wargames intense.

Picture Perfect Golf
(30) Empire – Sports Sim £44.99
Pretty bloody naff. But hey, if you want to look at nice, digitised pictures of a golf course, this is well worth the dosh.

Prisoner Of Ice
(88: Recommended) Infogrames – Adventure £44.99
The second in the *Cthulhu* range – and it's a stonker of a point-and-click adventure.

Scottish Open Golf
(60) Core Design – Sports Sim £39.99
Core Design finally releases its 3D virtual golf thing. There are some okay bits and some pretty nob bits. Unfortunately, it's the nob bits that win through.

Silverload
(7) Millennium/Psygnosis – Adventure Game £39.99
Millennium and Psygnosis team up to produce an adventure which is truly... quite awful.

Striker 95
(62) Time Warner – Sports Sim £34.99
A football game that looks really fab and groovy, but doesn't quite cut it in the gameplay stakes.

Ultimate Doom
(90: Classic) GT Interactive – Shoot 'Em Up £29.99
The original *Doom* re-packaged with an extra episode. Is it another classic or just a colossal rip-off?

Vortex
(80: Recommended) Warner Interactive – Interactive Movie £39.99
It's an interactive movie. No, it's a game. It's an interactive movie. No, it's a game. Arrghh!!!

Issue 30 – September 1995

Across the Rhine
(86: Recommended) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
If you're a propellor head you'll think it's the dog's gonads. If you're a bit of a thicky, you'll still like it, once you work your way through the laborious manual, that is.

Action Soccer
(50) Ubisoft – Football Sim £34.99
It had potential, but ultimately *Action Soccer* seems to have been relegated to the ranks of 'another crap footie game'.

Air Power
(84: Recommended) Mindscape – Flight Sim £44.99
Rowan teams up with Mindscape and chucks in all the best bits from its other flight sims, to make up a sort of fantasy strategy game, which is really pretty groovy.

AIV Networks
(80: Recommended) Infogrames – Business Sim £44.99
A business sim for people who love trains. (Yee gods! What next?)

Dungeon Master 2
(59) Interplay – Role Playing Game £44.99
It came out late and it wasn't worth the wait. Disappointingly out-dated and old-fashioned.

Last Dynasty
(45) Sierra – Space Combat Sim £44.99
A good *Windows*-based adventure game, which is completely ruined by crap combat sections.

Lords Of Midnight
(60) Domark – Adventure £44.99
Another very old game that's been given the sequel treatment – our reviewer said it was the biggest let-down since that leak in his inflatable Claire Rayner.

Sim Town
(81: Recommended) Maxis – Simulation £29.99
Fun and educational in equal measures. But even better, you can make people say rude things when they're pissed off.

Simon The Sorcerer 2
(84: Recommended) Adventure Soft (UK) – Adventure Game £44.99
Simon returns with DMs and long hair. Even though Chris Barrie hasn't done the voice this time, it's still a bloody good talkie adventure.

Space Quest 6
(70) Sierra – Adventure Game £44.99
Trite adventure completely devoid of humour. *Space Quest* fans will love it!

Terminal Velocity
(80: Recommended) US Gold – Shoot 'Em Up £44.99
Very good 3D engine, wearing a pair of rather unoriginal, unaddictive 'game-play trousers'.

US Marine Fighters
(92: Classic) Electronic Arts – Flight Sim £19.99
Absolutely brilliant. The only thing that prevented us giving *US Marine Fighters* 100 per cent was the lack of a network facility.

Issue 31 – October 1995

EF2000
(97: Classic) Ocean/DID – Flight Sim £49.99
Something for everyone. The best balance between simulator and game, ever.

Fade To Black
(94: Classic) Electronic Arts – Arcade Adventure £44.99
A corking follow up to *Flashback*, with lots of spinny-aroundy polygon bits, morphing monsties and big guns.

The Need For Speed
(89: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Racing £44.99
There's no need to buy a 3DO now this has made it to the PC! This sits somewhere between *Screamer* and the forthcoming *F1GP2*. We love the splendid crashes!

Apache Longbow
(96: Classic) Digital Integration – Sim £39.99
The best helicopter sim around; although *Comanche* looks better, nothing comes close to matching the mixture of spot on handling, tactics, networking and atmosphere.

Buried in Time
(77) US Gold – Interactive Movie £44.99
The sequel to *The Journeyman Project* is a tad too lengthy; technically it's great but it's lacking the elements of truly enjoyable gameplay.

MechWarrior 2
(88: Recommended) Activision – Board Game £49.99
Mayhem! Go on a stomping frenzy encased in a massive armour-plated robot body. Good, hard-hitting fun with plenty of missions and a good difficulty curve.

Blown Away
(19) Instant Access – Interactive Movie £39.99
A pretty crap game of a pretty crap film.

Cyberbykes
(10) Gametek – Shoot 'Em Up £24.99
It came, it saw, it sucked. Ideal as a present for someone you don't like.

Lemmings 3D
(71) Psygnosis – Puzzle Game £39.99
We've seen it all before; all that's new is that it's now from a different angle. Yawn.

Player Manager 2
(45) Anco – Sport £34.99
Visually stunted, it's difficult to control the ball. What else? Oh, it's one to avoid.

Championship Manager 2
(92: Classic) Domark – Sport £44.99 (TBC)
Every other football management game is just that – a game – but this one actually becomes 'real life'.

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Al Unser Jr Racing
(60) Mindscape – Racing Game £29.99
It has all the features you'd expect from a racing game but ultimately it's fun for only a limited time.

Ascendancy
(93: Classic) Virgin – Strategy £39.99
More than just another space-based strategy game, this has got all the best bits of every god/strategy/warfare game available. A word of warning though, get stuck into this and you can say goodbye to your social life.

Battle Beast
(68) 7th Level – Beat 'Em Up £29.99
A cartoon beat 'em up with great animation, cut scenes and special effects – it looks great, but as for gameplay – forget it.

Burn:Cycle
(85: Recommended) Philips – Interactive Adventure £44.99
One of the best interactive adventures we've seen; good pacing, sharp plot and plenty of variety combine to make it outstanding.

Crime Patrol & Gamegun
(70) American Laser Games/Mirage – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
It won't take you long to exhaust the fun factor of *Crime Patrol*, but the gun is compatible with some other games and as a bundled package it's really not bad value.

Darker
(62) Psygnosis – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Mediocre 3D blast 'em up with nice smooth polygons, lots to shoot at, but not much more.

Fatal Racing
(88: Recommended) Gremlin Interactive – Racing £TBC
Ridge Racer meets *Stunt Car Racer*... as long as you've got a Pentium, of course.

Magic Carpet 2
(92: Classic) Electronic Arts – Shoot 'Em Up £44.99
It sent our reviewer into a frenzy! The classic game is now even better, with new monsters and a new graphical style which includes scary night-time bits – totally addictive.

»

(Left) *Theme Park: Sim City* eat your heart out.

NHL Hockey 96
(90: Classic) Electronic Arts – Sport £44.99
This uses Electronic Art's new 'Virtual Stadium' technology (usedin *FIFA Soccer* to make it look so flash). One of the nicest-looking sports games we've reviewed for ages.

PGA Tour 96
(94: Classic) Electronic Arts – Sport £44.99
New and improved! Now includes two new Championship courses, you can play *as* or *against* 14 actual photo-realistic pros, there's a new picture-in-picture view... need we go on? The best golf game just got better.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure
(70) Activision – Platform £44.99
Conversion of the ancient Atari VCS platform game; nothing particularly special but still fairly addictive.

Primal Rage
(82: Recommended) Time Warner Interactive – Beat 'Em Up £39.99
Jurassic Park for psychopaths – yep, dinosaurs a-plenty, good gameplay and graphics. Should appeal to *Mortal Kombat* or *Street Fighter* fans.

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Alien Odyssey
(77) Philips – Space Adventure Game £44.99
A sort of cross between *Bioforge* and *Cyberia*, with the odd *Star Wars* reference thrown in; overall a pretty adventure which plods a bit.

Battle Isle 3: Shadow Of The Emperor
(93: Classic) Blue Byte – Strategy £45.99
The third and possibly final instalment of one of the most highly respected strategy games of all time. Certainly worth checking out if you like your strategy futuristic.

Comanche Vs Werewolf
(88: Recommended) Novalogic/ US Gold – Helicopter Flight Sim £39.99
The sequel takes the original game and chucks in a completely new one for good measure. Maybe not the best helicopter flight sim, but there's plenty to recommend it.

Crusader
(91: Classic) Electronic Arts – Blast 'Em Up £49.99
Action, adventure, people getting their heads blown off – bloody excellent.

Destruction Derby
(90: Classic) Sony Interactive – Racing Game £44.99
The PlayStation game where you can smash yourself and others to pieces comes to the PC... Plenty of network options, five different ways to play, superb graphics – need we say more?

FIFA '96
(84: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Sport £44.99
If you already own last year's *FIFA* and you quite like it, it's worth buying this one. But if you want a simple and easy to control system look elsewhere.

Mortal Kombat 3
(90: Classic) GT Interactive – Beat 'Em Up £44.99
This is the best two-dimensional beat 'em up you'll find anywhere right now. Make damn sure you enjoy it while it lasts.

Navy Strike
(90: Classic) Empire Interactive – Naval Sim £44.99
Actually two games in one: a flight sim and a military command sim. In it you pilot a jet fighter in the future – you'll find that once the atmosphere kicks in you're hooked.

Phantasmagoria
(50) Sierra – Adventure £49.99
Without doubt a brave effort (spanning seven CDs!) but sadly the interactive part is a bit ambitious. It looks good but that's about it.

Road Warrior
(61) Gametek – Driving Game £39.99
The sequel to *Quarantine* is nothing to write home about, despite the good graphics.

Screamer
(89: Recommended) VIE – Driving Game £29.99
Stunning looking super speedy arcade racer with six different tracks, six different cars (manual or auto) and three different skill levels. Very arcadey indeed.

Worms
(84: Recommended) Ocean – Strategy £34.99
Worms is what you get if you cross *Lemmings* with *Cannon Fodder*. Four people can play at once, there's lots of weapons and features, and the levels are generated afresh each time you play – good fun.

Witchaven
(88: Recommended) US Gold – Arcade/Role-Playing Game £29.99
Witchaven is packed with lots of spells and potions to play with, the usual network/ modem options, triggers and traps, impressive graphical effects – and if you're looking for gore you've found it. Sick, twisted and violent – we like it.

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Actua Soccer
(92: Classic) Gremlin Interactive – Sport £TBC
Ranking alongside *Command & Conquer* as *the* office favourite at the moment, this is currently the best footie game on the PC thanks to excellent gameplay and a fantastic 3D polygonised pitch arrangement – sorry *FIFA* and *Sensi*, but you'll have to step aside.

Entomorph
(78) Mindscape – Role-Playing Game £44.99
If you've already got a copy of *Ultima VII* and fancy something similar in style, *Entomorph* is worth a look. It's got a fairly engrossing storyline, although the presentation is somewhat lacklustre.

Fighter Duel
(65) Philips Media – Flight Sim £39.99
There's very little to say about this game as there's actually very little to it – don't expect it to keep you rivetted to the screen; even what little scenery there is is dull.

F1 Grand Prix Manager
(85: Recommended) MicroProse – Racing £44.99
One of the most imaginative management simulations around – certainly the best Grand Prix one available, but then it's the only one.

Frankenstein: Through The Eyes Of The Monster
(79) Interplay – Adventure £44.99
Starring Tim Curry, this is an excellent gothic adventure. The puzzles are challenging, the storyline is cleverly structured, the visuals are sumptuous, but sadly it's hampered by a dodgy interface which makes it difficult to navigate your way through the locations.

IndyCar 2
(90: Classic) Papyrus/Virgin – Racing £34.99
Polygontastic with absolutely glorious SVGA graphics. If you already own *IndyCar 1*, hold out for *F1GP2* instead. But if you don't, buy this one. Oh, but if we're really honest here, you ought to try to afford *F1GP2* as well.

Mortal Coil
(50) Vic Tokai/Virgin – Strategic Shoot 'Em Up £34.99
Is this yet another *Doom* clone? It basically involves loads of shooting everything you see from a 3D perspective. A great idea on paper, but it's let down by poor graphics and voiceovers (even with the dubious talents of Dani Behr) – you may well prefer *Hexen*.

Pinball World
(77) 21st Century Entertainment – Pinball £44.99
For some reason there seems to be more pinball and footie games coming out than you could possibly want, and although you've got a choice of table layouts (which you don't really need anyway) it doesn't really offer anything markedly different.

Pro Pinball: The Web
(90: Classic) Empire Interactive – Pinball £34.99
Don't discount this game because it only features one table as it's packed with goodies, you can see the table in its entirety or from six different viewpoints, it's realistic (you can nudge the table from either side as well as the bottom), and it's got an a totally stonking soundtrack as well.

Rebel Assault II
(90: Classic) LucasArts/VIE – Shoot 'Em Up £49.99
If you can't see what all the fuss about *Star Wars* is about or you didn't like the original *Rebel Assault*, chances are you won't like this one. On the other hand, if you're a die-hard Empire/Rebel fan and spend your nights re-enacting scenes between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader, you'll love it. Of course solid action, 'real' live action bits, bloody gorgeous graphics and a corking storyline go some way to recommend it as well.

Sensible World Of Soccer
(60) Warner Interactive – Sport £39.99
We waited a long time for this one. It's got some management bits, some nice rendered cut-scenes and commentary, but it's still not a patch on *Actua Soccer*.

Stonekeep
(76) Interplay – Role-Playing Game £44.99
It looks a bit dated (mainly because it's flick-screen), but in its favour it has a nice, easy to handle control method, a wide variety of levels to keep you interested and a very thoughtful experience system which allows your character(s) to become more skilled with their weapons the more they use them.

Su27 Flanker
(95: Classic) Mindscape – Flight Simulation £44.99
Developed by Russian pilots, this is all about one of the scariest aircraft ever built. It's no lightweight 'hop in and pole around the sky' type product, but unfortunately it's let down by a lack of network or serial link multi-play facility. If you want a comparison it's better than *EF2000*, *MiG29* and *Tornado*.

The Dig
(87: Recommended) LucasArts/VIE – Adventure Game £44.99
Another offering touched by the hand of Spielberg. It's a proper adventure with a proper story, a cut above your usual sci-fi adventure stuff. And it's got great music.

Tilt
(80: Recommended) Virgin Interactive – Pinball Game £TBC
You get six tables to choose from (including Monster, Funfair, Gangster, Sci-Fi, Myst and Majik). It doesn't have the depth of the single table in *The Web*, but it's good all the same.

Williams Arcade Classics
(90: Classic) GT Interactive – Various £29.99
Worth buying for an arcade-perfect version of *Defender* alone, this '80s compilation also includes *Robotron 2084*, *Stargate Defender 2*, *Joust*, *Bubbles* and *Sinistar*. The graphics obviously aren't too hot given the age of the titles, but don't hold that against it.

WipeOut
(78) Sony Interactive – Racing £44.99
Winging its way directly from the PlayStation, this game of anti-gravity racing with floating cars seems to have lost something in the conversion; play it on anything other than a Pentium and you can kiss the PC version's smoothness and graphical details goodbye. Top marks for the brilliant soundtrack though.

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Battleground Ardennes
(84: Recommended) Empire Interactive – Wargame £40 (TBC)
One for the serious strategy heads among you – hex-wargaming finally gets updated for the '90s. (NB: You'll need Windows 95 to play it.)

Beavis and Butt-head
(87: Recommended) Viacom New Media – Point-and-click Adventure £39.99
Fans of the gruesome twosome will love this game (but avoid it if you're not as it's unlikely to appeal). Plenty of puzzle solving and a hilarious script – it's like being in control of your very own *Beavis and Butt-head* episode.

Extreme Pinball
(65) Electronic Arts – Pinball Game £39.99
So what did our reviewer make of the 'proper' version of *Epic Pinball*? He had one word for it: "Aaaarrrggghh!" If you're after a top quality pinball game, buy *Pro Pinball: The Web* instead.

Quest For Fame
(80: Recommended) IBM – Music RPG £49.95
Air guitar rules! Pick up the plastic plectrum and join Aerosmith for a riff extravaganza as you try to make it from unknown musician to mega rock 'n' roll star – if you succeed you get to play with the band themselves!

Terminator: Future Shock
(85: Recommended) VIE– Strategic Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
The third title in the *Terminator* series, this has plenty of action and atmosphere, as well as one of the best 3D engines around.

The 11th Hour
(67) Trilobyte/VIE – Adventure/Puzzle Game £TBC
The sequel to *The 7th Guest* has been a long time coming – unfortunately it wasn't really worth the wait. It's not really that different either, apart from the addition of a 'treasure hunt' challenge. But then if you *really, really* like puzzles you may find that this game is pretty playable.

The Hive
(78) Funsoft UK – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
A pre-rendered blastathon which is a bit like *Rebel Assault*, only without the good bits.

This Means War!
(89: Recommended) MicroProse – Strategy Wargame £44.99
Strategy, action and lots of futuristic stuff, a sort of *Command & Conquer* meets *Transport Tycoon*. It's slower *C&C*, but addictive once you've got to grips with all the options.

Virtua Fighter Remix
(89: Recommended) Sega/Datrontech – Beat 'Em Up £varies, bundled with Diamond Edge graphics card
Bloody stunning visuals with excellent detail on the players – but in the gameplay stakes it doesn't quite match up to *Mortal Kombat 3* or *StreetFighter II Turbo*.

Virtual Karts
(71) MicroProse – Arcade Racing Game £TBC
MicroProse have cleverly applied the word 'virtual' to the title – but don't ask why, 'cos the karts don't handle like karts and the hi-res graphics are jerk-tastic.

William Shatner's TekWar
(58) Capstone/US Gold – Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
What a pity, as this is just a *Doom* clone, and we reckon you could probably quite happily live without it... (Sorry Will!)

Wing Commander IV
(85: Recommended) Origin/Electronic Arts – Space Combat Sim £TBC
The filmed sequences apparently cost over eight million dollars – and it shows, as they really are very impressive. Unfortunately though, despite a genuinely interesting plot, a strong storyline and the fact that *Wing Commander IV* is the most cinematic gaming experience you'll find, the gameplay's seriously lacking. You'll also need a mighty meaty PC to play it on.

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Absolute Zero
(70) Domark – Space Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Don't even consider attempting *Absolute Zero* unless your PC's got a *serious* amount of spare hard disk space – our reviewer found that it needed 20MB just to have the menu running at optimum performance! It's all a bit of a shame really, as this could have been an entertaining variation on the *Wing Commander /Elite* genre: it's got loads of ground-based missions, various different characters, some fairly complex mission objectives, SVGA spaceships, alien monsties, a big plot twist... but it's also got bland scenery and a pretty disappointing frame rate. To sum up, it's *Wing Commander* on the rocks.

Civilization 2
(90: Classic) MicroProse – Strategy £44.99
This is basically an enhanced version of the first game, but the combat's been tightened up and plenty of new units and advances have been added, as well as 'hit points' – even die-hard fans of the original will find that there's still a lot to learn. Of course the biggest difference is that *Civilization 2* is completely 3D – although moving up a perspective can make things cluttered and sometimes hard to follow at times, especially if you use the option to have multiple windows open at once. (NB: Windows 95 or 3.1 with WinG required.)

Firestorm: Thunderhawk 2
(60) Core Design – Helicopter Sim £TBC
The Sega CD helicopter blaster gets updated for the PC – although we're not really sure why they bothered. Although its got arcade-style controls it's even less realistic than most games of its type, and it's totally spoilt by a haphazard viewpoint – one minute the sky's empty, the next you've got something right in

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(Right) *Alone in the Dark 3:* More Carnby, cobwebs, murder, mystery and mayhem.

(Far right) *Command & Conquer.* A case of *Cannon Fodder* meets *Dune 2.*

front of you. Even worse, targets that you lock onto can vanish from sight as you fire. This means you end up shooting from a stationary position, making you more vulnerable to attack and, basically, ruining the game.

Formula One Grand Prix 2
(95: Classic) MicroProse – Racing £44.99
Our reviewer called this an absolute masterpiece – even menu screens, sub menus, pre-race options and set-up screens can keep you happily occupied for ages. If you want the options and textures in their full glory you'll need a Pentium, but even in low-res it looks great. The attention.to detail is amazing thanks to Geoff Crammond's perfectionism, and the physics of the game engine are outstanding – give up your social life *now!*

Police Quest: SWAT
(83: Recommended) Sierra – Adventure £49.99
Daryl Gates makes a welcome return with what has to be the best game in the *Police Quest* series. It's a different and enjoyable twist on the traditional adventure game – the only thing holding it back from a classic rating is a lack of compatibility with a light gun.

Rayman
(76) UbiSoft – Platform Game £TBC
From the Sony PlayStation come cutesy Disney-esque sprites, silky smooth parallax scrolling and colourful backgrounds with 68 levels; however, there aren't any that clever puzzles or particularly taxing levels, just nice graphics and a learning curve that veers from easy-peasy to annoying. Sorry *Rayman*, but despite the good presentation, you're ultimately a bit limited and pretty linear.

The Beast Within: Gabriel Knight 2
(88: Recommended) Sierra – Adventure £44.99
Admittedly *The Beast Within* isn't perhaps the most difficult game you'll ever play, but as an interactive movie it's *brilliant.* The acting is great, the FMV scenes contribute beautifully to the atmosphere and the plot gets increasingly complex and engrossing. Excellent!

Time Gate
(84: Recommended) Infogrames – Arcade Adventure £44.99
From the team that brought us *Alone In The Dark* comes something that looks like erm... *Alone In The Dark,* but set back in the days of the Knights Templar. However, there are some annoying inconsistencies, downright infuriating puzzles, items that are impossible to pick up, and it's easy to miss things, on top of that you'll find yourself saving furiously because you keep getting brutally killed when you least expect it. If you like *AITD,* you'll like this as it's almost exactly the same – which is why we haven't given it a higher score.

Warcraft 2: Tides Of Darkness
(82: Recommended) Zablac – Strategy £44.99
Despite a dodgy AI *Warcraft 2* is very addictive and enjoyable – and it's even better still if you can take advantage of the multi-player option and play over a network. All in all, a definite 'must-buy' for anyone who liked the original.

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Allied General
(83: Recommended) SSI/Mindscape – Wargame £44.99
The follow-up to the highly successful *Panzer General.* Not much different, although the interface has been enhanced and thanks to Windows you can have any resolution you like. The ground scale is a bit haphazard and varies too much from scenario to scenario, but on the whole *Allied General* should find favour not only with wargamers but with casual wargamers as well. Simplistic yes, but there's far more to this game than most of its genre. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

Battleground Gettysburg
(87: Recommended) Empire Interactive – Strategy Wargame £39.99
The second in the *Battleground* series has an excellent feel for the Gettysburg battles (1-3 July 1863). QuickTime movies really are a visual treat, the sound effects are excellent, and if you get stuck there's a comprehensive manual and a Quick Start guide. *Gettysburg* is well-produced and highly playable – hex-head wargamers will love it. But, you'll need 130MB hard disk space for full installation, or 60MB otherwise. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

Big Red Racing
(87: Recommended) Domark – Racing £TBC
This is rather like a first-person perspective *Micro Machines.* It's brilliant fun, with 24 huge courses (including Mars, Venus, Moon and water) and there are loads of vehicles to choose from (snow ploughs, big foot monster trucks, Florida 'swampmaster' semi-amphibious propellor boat things...). You can even recreate *The Italian Job* bombing round Italy in a Mini!

Comix Zone
(68) Sega – Beat 'Em Up £29.99
Seriously tedious beat 'em up from Sega's newly-founded PC team. You play the part of a cartoonist trapped inside a comic book. Yawn.

Descent 2
(90: Classic) Interplay – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £TBC
Hardened *Descent* players will find adequate new perils to test them, but the game's well-paced enough for newbies. There are new weapons, monsties and great sound effects, plus 'Capture The Flag' team games where you can take sides and co-ordinate tactics to overcome your rivals. Overall it's a fun, involving and addictive game. If you loved the original, you'll be totally besotted with this one.

Ecco The Dolphin
(55) Sega – Arcade £29.99
The Mega Drive game from a few years ago. Unfortunately even the pretty animation can't save it from being totally boring. Next!

Extreme Games
(70) Psygnosis – Sport £29.99
The PlayStation 'trendy sports' game involving mountain bikes, skateboards, in-line skates and street luges, but the PSX version has excellent graphics and the animation is much, much better – it's too slow on a P133 and even with the detail switched down it plods along, thus destroying any enjoyment factor it might have had.

Ian Botham International Cricket
(78) Beam Software – Sport £34.99
Surprisingly good simulation of one of the world's dullest sports. It's not as playable as the SNES version and has embarrassingly cheap and tacky FMV footage – essentially though it's playable and a good laugh.

NBA Live 96
(85: Recommended) Electronic Arts/EA Sports – Sport £44.99
It's basketball's turn for EA's Virtual stadium treatment, which means four different angles for each camera. It's fast, with intuitive controls, reasonably well-animated player sprites as well as being playable in both one- and two-player modes. The in-game graphics are a bit muted and it can be hard to follow the ball when the game gets crowded but it's very playable all the same. There are three levels of difficulty and an option to play exhibition games or a full game season, plus arcade, simulation and custom modes.

Resurrection: Rise 2
(73) Acclaim/Mirage – Beat 'Em Up £44.99
Far better than the original, but a long way from being a classic. It borrows from other established beat 'em ups: it's got *Street Fighter's* projectile weapons, *Mortal Kombat's* death moves and the super-combo moves of Nintendo's *Killer Instinct.* It appears to have everything – moves, hordes of characters and secret warriors, bonus levels – but it doesn't have the same addictive gameplay. When you kick and punch the blows don't 'connect', and what's the point of a beat 'em up where you don't feel that you're inflicting any grief?

Tempest 2000
(85: Recommended) Atari – Arcade £29.99
Atari's 15-year old game revamped with a kicking techno track. You have to defend your tunnel by shooting at the enemy craft trying to invade your space – but don't be deceived by the simplicity of it, it's not as easy as it sounds. Hours and hours of classic arcade fun.

Tomcat Alley
(34) Sega – Flight Sim £29.99
Repetitive gameplay, dodgy graphics. Ugh!

Top Gun
(92: Classic) MicroProse – Flight Sim £TBC
Excellent, apart from dodgy misleading views and a frame rate in hi-res which is only just acceptable on a P133. MicroProse have pulled off what everyone else has been trying to do, which is to add a cinematic storyline to a flight sim. These bits blend together without being overlong, so that no momentum is lost. Atmosphere, with a capital 'A'.

Warhammer
(73) Mindscape – Strategy Wargame £TBC
Addictive, challenging real-time strategy with an interesting setting and strong plot. Once you're hooked you'll come back for more, even though it really is much too hard, the control system is too fiddly and chance plays too much of a role. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

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ATF
(92: Classic) Electronic Arts – Flight Simulation £44.99
The *US Navy Fighters* engine gets seriously spruced up and then introduced to a large number of 'conceptual' aircraft. The plane's smooth flying is brilliant and the differences between the aircraft are more than noticeable. This is seriously good stuff for the propeller heads among you.

C&C: The Covert Operations
(84: Recommended) Virgin – Strategy £14.99
Argh! Spooge. Spooge...
If you've enjoyed fighting your way through *Command & Conquer* you can carry on – the mission disc is here! It's a must-have for any *C&C* fan, but be warned that it's bloody hard!

Metaltech Earthsiege 2
(90: Classic) Sierra – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £44.99
Earthsiege is widely regarded as the best of all the big robot games – and the good news is that the sequel has better graphics, better sound effects and loads of new weapons. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

Kingdom O'Magic
(82: Recommended) SCI – Adventure £44.99
More point-and-click fun, but this time with stereotypical gay hairdressers and women with huge boobs. It's quite funny at times.

Normality
(90: Classic) Gremlin Interactive – Adventure £TBC
Gremlin's ambitious and superb 3D point-and-click adventure proves that you can still muck around with genres and come up with something new. It's not quite as funny as the likes of *Sam and Max* or *Discworld,* but it's certainly well worth having a look at.

PGA European Tour
(94: Classic) EA Sports – Sport £44.99
For all of you budding Nick Faldos and Ian Woosnams out there, test your swing with the greatest golf game in existence. It gets de-Yanked and tweaked a bit and is another classic from EA Sports.

Speed Haste
(79) Electronic Arts – Racing £29.99
Imagine a cross between *Virtua Racing* and *Daytona USA* that only costs thirty quid and doesn't look quite as good.

Spycraft
(91: Classic) Activision – Adventure £49.99
Activision have surprised us all with this one. It's basically a 'spy simulator', and if you've ever fancied getting your grubby mits on spy satellites, decoding routines, image analysers and infra-red goggles, now's your chance. This has loads of FMV, loads of puzzles and has some of the most original features we've seen for a long time. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

S.T.O.R.M.
(70) Electronic Arts – Shoot 'Em Up £TBC
Nice graphics, traditional controls, but what happened to the gameplay? And er... this looks like *Scramble,* but with much prettier graphics.

Virtual Snooker
(60) Interplay – Sport £34.99
A year after *Virtual Pool,* we get the same game, except that this time around it's with snooker balls and loads and bloody loads of FMV of Steve 'intensely dull' Davis. A complete video of a 147 break, anyone? No?

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Assault Rigs
(78) Psygnosis – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £34.99
Direct from the PlayStation, this is basically a 3D platform game in a tank: there are various gems to collect, complicated level layouts and minor puzzles. The controls are a little too complicated but it plays well and is action-packed at times. There's also a network option for up to eight people. Well worth a look.

Azrael's Tear
(90: Classic) Mindscape – Role-Playing Game £44.99
An atmospheric blend of *Ultima Underworld* and *System Shock,* this is a worthy rival to the *Alone In The Dark* series.

Chronicles Of The Sword
(68) Psygnosis – Adventure/Puzzle Game £39.99
Although *COTS* is set in the time of King Arthur, you take on the lesser role of Gawain. The storyline doesn't live up to the potential of the subject matter and although there are some well-crafted puzzles, they don't fit into the gameplay very well. It looks good but it's just a bit too boring.

Conquest Of The New World
(75) Interplay – Strategy £TBC
The Yanks loved it, but we found it slow, cumbersome and lacking in excitement.

Star Trek: Deep Space 9 – Harbinger
(52) Viacom – Adventure £39.99
Unlike *A Final Unity,* this one doesn't quite reach warp speed. It's not as interactive as it should be – even die-hard Trekkers will fail to be swayed by it. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

Fantasy General
(92: Classic) SSI/Mindscape – Strategy Wargame £44.99
The third in the *General* series uses the same basic combat and movement engine as *Panzer General* and *Allied General.* It's the most exciting strategy wargame of the year so far.

Fast Attack
(86: Recommended) Sierra – Submarine Sim £39.99
Ultra-complex but ultimately rewarding – newbies might find it a bit hard though. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

Silent Thunder
(60) Sierra – Flight Sim £39.99
The follow-up to *A10 Tank Killer* – it looks amazing, but the fact that you're constrained to a very small geographic area, the game map is cluttered and unhelpful and the whole thing suffers from extreme jerk-o-vision makes it bloody annoying. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

TNN Bass Tournament
(80: Recommended) Electronic Arts – Fishing Sim £39.99
It's good, but not quite as good as *Trophy Bass* as it's more about amassing money than actually reeling the buggers in.

Terra Nova
(90: Classic) Virgin Interactive – 3D Shoot 'Em Up £39.99
Another robot title, this time from the people who brought you *System Shock* and *Flight Unlimited.* The graphics and sound effects could be better but that aside it's very enjoyable, fast-moving and atmospheric.

Track Attack
(65) MicroProse – Racing Game £29.99
It sounds promising but fails to deliver the gameplay goods. It's slow even on a P75 and lack of control adds to the frustration.

Trophy Bass
(85: Recommended) Sierra – Fishing Sim £39.99
Near perfect, especially as you get to go fishing at any time of year with all the comforts of home. Smart!

Zork Nemesis
(65) Activision – Adventure/Puzzle Game £44.99
Our Chris loved the last game in the series, *Return To Zork,* but was disappointed with this one. The music's very atmospheric and the graphics are absolutely stunning but you never come across any characters to interact with, which makes wandering about solving puzzle after puzzle tedious and boring. However, if you're a fan of *Myst* and *The 11th Hour* it's quite likely that *Nemesis* will appeal. (NB: Windows 95 required.)

WORDPROCESSOR

Quake versus _Duke Nukem 3D_ a-bloody-gain, Windows 95 again and ooh – what a surprise – _F1GP2_... again. The whinge-mob display a certain lack of originality this month.

QUAKE VS DUKE NUKEM AGAIN!

I read the last issue of your mag (May) – weren't there loads of *Quake/Duke 3D* comparisons? Well here's another. I reckon *Quake* takes itself too seriously; sure it looks good, but how long will that last? Smells like *Doom III* to me. *Duke* on the other hand is original (well, at least as original as *Doom* clones get), and the graphics on the alien UFO are fucking amazing!!! The end of demo monstie kicks butt and you can't make cheesy quotes better than Duke can!

If *Quake* does manage to produce the same amount of playability, then okay, granted it wins hands down – but that remains to be seen.

Jesse Chin Sin Lim,
101322.1302@compuserve.com

Well, yes. I think that your last sentence sums it up. Everyone is comparing a full-blown shareware version of Duke Nukem *to the Deathmatch TEST version of* Quake. *If* Quake *is coming off well under those circumstances then don't you think that when we get a full version of* Quake *it's going to blow everything else away? Okay, it's true that* Duke *is a fine game... but at the end of the day it's just a jumped up, very good* Doom *clone.* Quake *is different...* Quake *rocks.* Quake *is... for men. Is that cheesy enough for you?*

IS DOOM ANY GOOD? ARE YOU MAD?

I have a friend (no, really) who owns a Macintosh, and he's always coming round to my house to play games on my computer. First we start a league in *Speedball 2* (classic game!). In the event that I can't find the disk (which is most of the time), we play *Doom*. One question he asks on a fairly regular basis is: "Do you reckon that if *Doom* was released now, it would get appreciated as much as it did back then and still is now?" I usually mumble something like, "*Doom* changed the PC gaming world and if it were released now rhubarb rhubarb custard rhubarb... blah, blah, blah."

So this is where *PC Zone* comes in. Imagine that *Doom* had never happened, until, let's say, ooh... tomorrow. Imagine you receiving your review copy of this low-res blocky textured affair. Would you, in your infinite wisdom, actually like it, and would anyone buy it?

From a lifetime subscriber in search of enlightenment.

David Hall,
100557.1133@compuserve.com

Well... yes, because let's face it a) Doom *has inspired a good 30 or so per cent of the games that we've seen in the last two years and b) it's a bloody playable game.*

Doom *broke the barriers of 3D gaming and then broke the multi-player barriers with Deathmatch. It is a true milestone... all hail the great god etc, etc.*

F1GP2 CONTINUES TO UPSET

I have been informed by several sources that *F1GP2* is now set for release at the end of June! What the bollocks is going on with this game? It was first promised for last summer, then October, then November, then DEFINITELY Christmas, then DEFINITELY January, etc, etc, etc...

Myself, all my friends and many thousands of other people are extremely pissed off with MicroProse. We should be told what is going on.

Iain MacKenzie, imackenzie@uk.b-r.com

What the bollocks? Wow... what a great expression. Yep, we quite agree with you. We're assured now that the thing is nearly finished, but it's basically down to Geoff Crammond as to when it is finally deemed 'finished'. MicroProse are simply publishing and distributing the game: all of the creative and development management is handled by Geoff, and only he can say when the game is in a satisfactory state to be unleashed.

I know we've covered a lot of this ground before, and I've said many times that the version we saw was very stable and appeared complete, but in the last few months the game has apparently changed quite a bit. There are now more spectacular crashes (to name just one of the many new enhancements) and despite the long wait I'm sure that everyone will be more than satisfied with the final game. Regardless of the delays it really is bloody good and will establish itself as the new definitive racing simulation.

(Below) Cool – mayhem and dismembered bodies in *Duke*... but even so we still reckon *Quake*'s going to blow it right out of the water!

Write to PC Zone

There are numerous ways to transmit your delightful scrawlings to *PC Zone*. You can either use the traditional method, often described as 'snail-mail' by the pretentious technocrats of this world...

WordProcessor
PC Zone
Dennis Publishing
19 Bolsover Street
London
W1P 7HJ

...or you can be really hip, trendy and cyber and do a whacky e-mail thing

CompuServe: PC ZONE 100142, 2152
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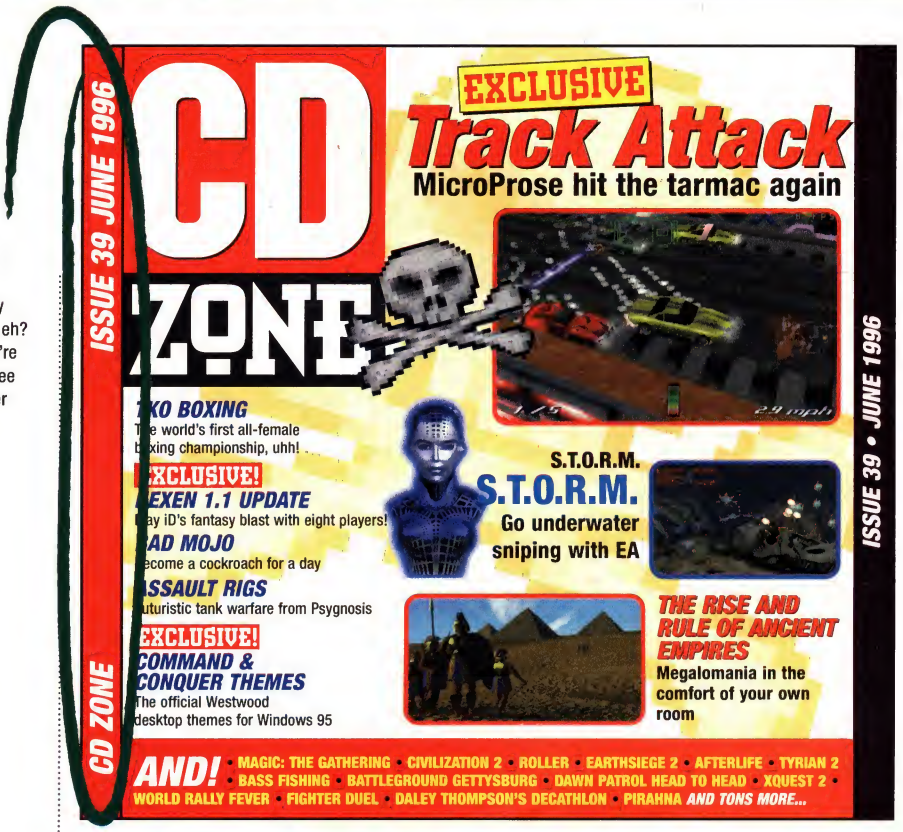


Let's face it... to many people the original F1GP *is still the best racing game around and that's been out for years and years. I know everyone's impatient and I know it's been annoying, but I'm sure the whole thing will be worth the wait.*

WHAT MILLENNIA?

This is the second e-mail I've sent you concerning the elusive *Millennia Altered Destinies*. It was released earlier this year, but so far there's been no trace of a review in the pages of *PC Zone*, or in any of your competitors whose pages I've scanned while browsing in WH Smiths. I've recently seen the game advertised for £14.95 (plus VAT), and this has made me even more wary in case it's following in the footsteps of *Frontier*.

Please would you shed a little light on this, even if it's only two words like 'it's crap'. I would just like to finish by saying that I still think Patrick McCarthy still reigns supreme in being able to make me laugh out loud while reading his reviews.

Anthony Lawrence,
100700.3301@compuserve.com

We saw Millennia *when it was being developed and it actually looked okay-ish. As far as I remember though, review copies were sent out, but it was at a time when there were loads and loads of games being released and it just worked its way down the list of everyone's priorities. We had a quick look at the thing and from what I remember it came under the "looks all right, but it's nothing special" category which tends to be the one that gets ignored most – you know it's not bad but it's not good either. These games have a tendency to disappear forever a few weeks after release and no one remembers them – or indeed cares. The best bet would probably be to forget about it.*

...And just for you, a photo of El Supremo!

(Left) Numero Uno in the mirth-making stakes... our Patrick currently has a beard but we don't have a photo of him with one, so we er... improvised a bit. Still – it looks just like him. A bit scraggy, but basically okay.

(Right) See... if we can do it – why can't anyone else, eh? We know what we're doing you know. See 'complete and utter loony' letter.

ABSOLUTE COMPLETE AND UTTER LOONY

Do you know what I *really* hate? Well, it's when games companies give you plastic CD cases without labels on the side. I have all my CDs on a rack on the wall and if I want to play *Apache Longbow* on *Fade To Black*, I've got to go fumbling about to find out which bloody case it's in. So thank you very much for putting labels on yours! It's not like I've got an obsession or anything. No, really.

The other thing I hate is when you only get those cardboard sleeves! They offer absolutely no protection to the CD, and I haven't got a convenient place to put them, except in stacked up by the speakers on my desk – even Windows 95 came in a sleeve. Other offenders include *Warhammer* (crap), *X-COM Terror From The Deep* (excellent), *SWOTL* (it's a bit old, I know, but still a larf), *Theme Park*, *Rebel Assault*... The list goes on! It's not like there's a major cost factor or anything.

Crusader: No Remorse comes in a nice plastic case, and there's even a fully illustrated colour manual inside. But there's no label, SO I CAN NEVER FIND IT! Why do companies do this? If PC mags have been able to do it just fine for several years without a price increase, then why the hell don't all the game companies splash out and put in proper plastic cases with labels on the side!

Paul Wicks,
101502.1534@compuserve.com

Okay, okay, chill out. They're just plastic cases okay? I'm sure that when the softco's produce the CD case they don't allow for EVERY eventuality. I dunno, maybe they think you're going to store the thing in the box – which, after all, stands a pretty good chance of being reasonably clearly marked. Paul, this is a disturbingly anally retentive attitude that you're displaying – if you don't pull yourself together and regain some sort of control you're in danger of portraying yourself as a bit of a twat.

FTP NIGHTMARES

Help! I've just spent an hour trying to download the *Quake* Deathmatch zip file but whenever I try to log on to iD's FTP site I can't get access (either with guest or anon). Do I need a password? If so, what is it?

Ian Law,
101352.2650@compuserve.com

This is something that we know quite a few people have had problems with as it's not completely obvious. Once you know what to do though it's pretty easy. To start with you want to put both of iD's FTP site addresses into your FTP package so that you can try to use either of them. Just in case you didn't know they are: ftp.idsoftware.com and fsp.idsoftware.com. When you log-on assign your user name as anonymous *(not* anon *as this won't work) and then simply use your full e-mail address as the password. If you have any trouble with this and get all fumbled up and lost you can use* cuteftp *on this month's cover CD which has iD's FTP already set up as an anonymous log-on. Cool huh? Don't say we never do anything for you.*

WHAT?

Do you reply to any old simple e-maily type o' thingy? I hope so, 'cos I have one simple little question that has been bugging me since the day the graceful pages of *PC Zone* flew open in front of my eyes and the cover disk slotted brutally into my floppy drive.

Okay, okay, I'll shut up and get on with it... For your cover disks and CDs,

(Above) *Command & Conquer: Red Alert* will be out later this year. Watch out for an exclusive from *Zone*.

how does it work? Choose from the following or else!
1) You pay them some dodgy cash?
2) They pay you some dodgierish cash?
3) It's a mutual type of agreement?
And... will your answer to this be:
1) Nothing... "We're not answering to the likes of you boy!"?
2) A nice polite and informative e-mail?
3) An insulting, stupid and rude, but cool response?

Simon Darkmane, Darkmane, 101505.753@compuserve.com

How does what work? What the bloody hell are you talking about? This is a perfect example of the sort of knob letters that we get from people where they just don't think about what it is that they're trying to ask us. Yes, by all means write in and say whatever you want... Slag us off, tell us we're great, ask a question – but for god's sake make it coherent enough so that we actually understand you. Considering that I really can't make any sense of this I'll just have to go for option number three. Here you go... Sod off.

WINDOWS 95... AGAIN

I'm replying to the letter David Taylor sent in the other month because I've had it up to my ears with Windows 95 and sound cards. I have a perfectly normal no-nonsense SoundBlaster Pro. I didn't even have to install it, Windows 95 did it for me! I thought I was on to a great thing.

Yeah, right – only the bloody thing doesn't work. I get great lovely sound in Windows (I particularly like it when I empty the recycle bin and on comes Leonard Nimoy: "He's dead, Jim"), but as for running DOS games... in some of them I don't get any music, some no FX, some no digitised speech, blah blah.

One problem I found was when there wasn't enough conventional memory to get digitised speech from *Day Of The Tentacle*. This could be a problem for Mr Taylor. I've got a spanking new P100 with 8MB RAM and Win 95, yet I've still got the same amount of conventional memory as on my speedy old 386SX. Why haven't the manufacturers sorted themselves out and reconfigured the damn machines?

And another thing... unsurprisingly enough about *Quake*. The alpha Deathmatch test needed 16MB of RAM to run under Windows 95. Will it need this in the final game? If that's the case, then bugger that – there's a lot of people who won't be buying it, and I'm one of them. It's not good enough to justify shelling out £200 for an upgrade.

Finally, I've been working on a game concept for a while, but I don't know where I should submit it. Any ideas?

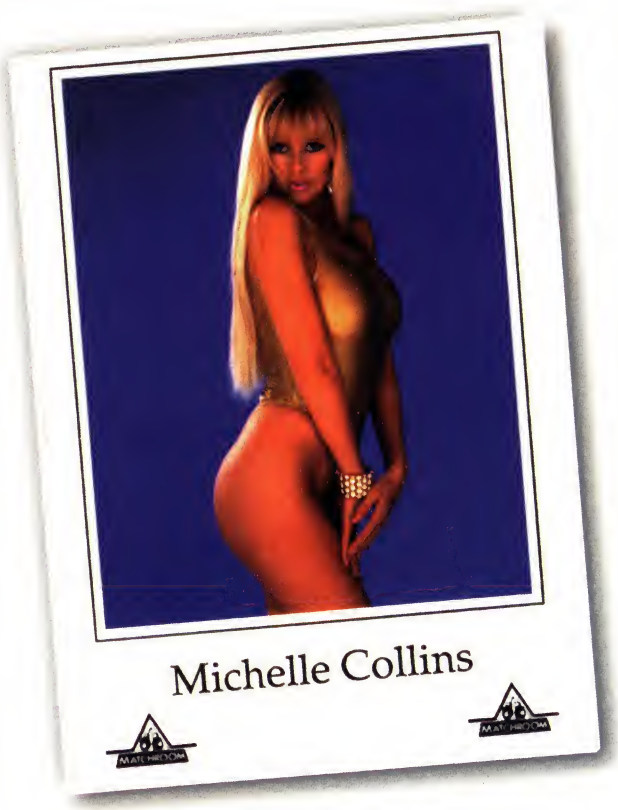
Andrew W. Bellenie, 101737.2766@compuserve.com

There are a lot of people out there who don't seem to fully appreciate just what Windows 95 is doing for us all. At the moment I think everyone could tell of some kind of problem or another, but in the next few months we're going to see things happening in the PC games market that just wouldn't come about at all if it weren't for Windows 95.

For a start, the Direct... range of software plug-ins means that we'll see MPEG video and superb polygon-generated visuals being produced through software under the new operating system. Secondly, as new hardware is introduced (such as hardware accelerators) Windows 95 will provide the environment in which these can be exploited in the most transparent way possible. By the end of next year we'll have spectacular 3D games that will take advantage of all manner of add-ons and we won't ever have to tell our machines what to do. The game will load, talk to Windows 95 and then run in a mode fully optimised for your system set-up – to do that under DOS would take hours of arsing about with systems files. Don't knock it. Get your system sorted out, get an extra 8Mb of RAM and you'll be laughing. Remember, 8Mb is only the MINIMUM spec that Windows 95 will run under.

We don't take spec all that seriously on games (I mean, would YOU run Wing IV *on a DX33?), so why should we on anything else – all the minimum spec says is what you need to make the thing work. Whether you like it or not Windows 95 is the way forward – we don't really have that much of a choice.*

(Below) Here we have the lovely Michelle, one time girl-star of *PC Zone* in yet another gratuitous example of us putting in a picture to wind people up.



TITS, SWEARING AND DUNGEON KEEPER

I've got several things I want to say. First of all, is there any release date for *C&C: Red Alert* yet? Second, in issue 38 one of you mystical beings said that *Seek and Destroy* (the game) shared its name with a Metallica song. That's true, but that song is crap anyway – their best one is *Welcome Home (Sanitarium)*. And so I go on... About the *C&C* new stuff (issue 38) – there is a dinosaur pack available. I know because I've got it. I can send it to you if you want as it's by some unknown person, so who cares?

When I first started reading *PC Zone* I thought it was great – it had swearing and tits and all sorts, but now it seems like either a re-run of *Eldorado* or a party political broadcasts by the Loony party.

And finally, has *Dungeon Keeper* been scraped? Or are Bullfrog just pissing us about? I'm off to get pissed now...

John Kingsland, 101627.1323@compuserve.com

Has Dungeon Keeper *been 'scraped'? With what? Why? What the hell are you on about? From what we've seen, the game is almost finished – the reason for the 'pissing about' is that Peter Molyneux (head honcho of Bullfrog) felt that a number of changes needed to be made. These have now been done and the game is in testing. If you read the* Dungeon Keeper *supplement that we produced you'll know a lot about the game, but the additions now include SVGA visuals, enhanced 3D and AI engines and new gameplay features such as tunnelling and mining. We have also seen that the whole way you 'build' the dungeon is now different.*

I'm keen to hear the reasons behind your thinking that PC Zone *is now like a re-run of* Eldorado. *Why is this? I don't think we've ever been particularly gratuitous on the tits and swearing front (well, all right – maybe once or twice, but not that often) but the magazine is still run with the same ideals it was a year ago.*

QUAKE... WHY NOT?

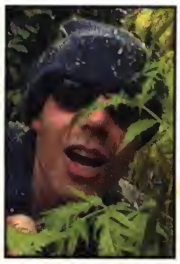
Why wasn't the *Quake* test included on *PC Zone*'s cover CD? Especially considering it's nearly 5MB to download, which is a right bugger when you've got a 14.4 modem, and can't get a transfer speed of over 0.5K/sec.

Richard Green, GreenRL@rikk.demon.co.uk

Due to the nature of the licensing agreement with the Quake *test file, no one is allowed to republish this particular demo. iD's attitude towards the file is that it is simply a test file which is being used to judg people's reaction to the Deathmatch feature of the game. It's not meant as a demonstratio of the full, final product. A full shareware version of* Quake *will be available soon and you can bet your arse that we'll make sure it's on the* Zone *disc.* Z

Culky Says

Welcome, welcome to Culky's Photoshop!



DEAR ENGLAND,
Alright? Culky here isn't it, from the rolling estates of Feltham Green, 1996.

Terry, this geezer what Colin knows, come round to see his old mate, doesn't it. We had a few bottles of drink and that, then Tezza goes to me, "Ere Col', while your mum's out let's have a gander at the old family pickees then."

I agreed to show him the family album only if he could get a 'piston' near mi food engine. He rose to the challenge.

Tezza goes to me, "Culk... isn't that the law at the door?"

Colin's eyes make a shifty to the hall, then Tezza sticks one on me! ...Right on mi food engine!

"There!" he goes, "That'll do ya wonnit? Now let ya old mate Tezza get a goose of your album!"

So Colin had to get the family album out, as Colin doesn't never not show his family pictures when he said just a second ago he was going to... so I did.

Tezza's jaw dropped like a crank bait when he sees mi family. "Wow! Look at your granny, she's a rock drummer! ...And your mum, she's a boxer! ...And your dad, a hitman for the Mafia! You Culks are unbelievably hard, harder than rock I'd say."

"Terry," I goes... "us Culks are as hard as TITANIUM NITRATE SULPHIDE!"

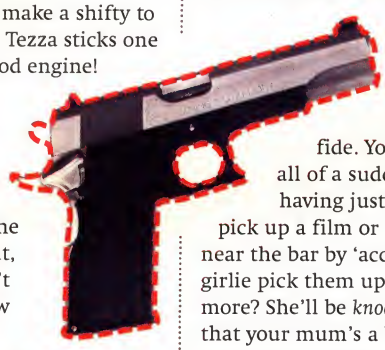
"What the bloody hell's Titanium Nitrate Sulphide?" Terry asks me.

I told him it was like diamonds but bigger and harder, and it's got more letters in it and that. He then started saying that the photos looked a bit 'funny' and that something was slightly 'wrong' with them, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it. I snatched the bottle out of his hand. Old Colin got his best pistons out... "Yeah? You reckon on it, is it? ...You saying that Colin's family is out of focus is it? ...No one says Colin's granny looks blurred!"

Terry dropped the album and legged it off. Culky don't never ever leg it away from no one ...and no one says Colin's photos look 'a bit funny' or out of focus! Not even his *best* mate Tezza!

I bet you're wondering how old Culky 'sorted' the family photo album though, well I'll tell ya ...I used 'Culk's Family Upgrade Kit' (stick-on version), Colin's boring relative remedy.

Just cut around the dotted line of the objects on this page, and stick 'em with paper glue on top of photos of your relatives, giving them instant cred. Your granny, a drummer in a flash! ...Just imagine the faces of your friends down the working men's club, as you 'suggest' to them that they are completely bona fide. You may also 'appear', all of a sudden, at a wine bar, having just been to Boots to pick up a film or two, and drop them near the bar by 'accident', let a nice girlie pick them up for you ...need I say more? She'll be *knocked-out* by the fact that your mum's a boxer, and be *all ears* because your gran's a drummer! She'll *take you hostage* when she sees your dad's a hitman! You can't fail with this kit! So get cutting and sticking today!



(Above, right and below) 'Culk's Family Upgrade Kit' – get cutting and sticking today!

(Below) Look, your granny... a heavy rock drummer!

(Below right) Gertrude liked her prize from Colin!

Culk's Creative Compo!

Back in the April issue I ran 'Culk's Creative Compo', and the prize was an original painting of Culky's mum, as used in the *PC Zone* CD-ROM video. Well, we have a winner – a Mrs Gertrude Stannway from East Sheen, London SW16. She successfully found Culky a cash-in-hand-job. Colin worked with her on her Cosworth Sierra, tuning the carbs for her, very carefully for two weeks, getting it ready for a 'special' family job. *(Thanks to Gertrude from all at* PC Zone *– Ed.)* There's a picture of her below, receiving her prize. Z

Culky's Community Cures

It's time for Colin's racy, hard and fast advice column. Your problems are Culky's pleasure!

Dear Mr Culk,
I was caught on a road camera speeding through some red traffic lights. It was late at night, and I saw it flash like a bolt of lightening from nowhere. What can I do?
Mark Bedford, Essex

Culky says... Dear Mark,
Set up a small tent by the camera and wait till the Bill come to get their film. Follow the PC and see which branch of Boots he takes the evidence-ridden emulsion. Wait 'til he's dropped the film off, get yourself a police hat (a plastic one will do, only £1.99), and go and collect the film.

Culky also says...
Say that you are from Scotland Yard on 'special' duty, and that they have to hand all police camera films to you.

Dear Mr Culk,
My mum tells me to brush my teeth every day before I go to school, or she says they'll rot, go black and fall out as I talk to my school chums. I hate the taste of toothpaste. My daddy told me to ask you.
Timothy Stevens, Maidstone, Kent

Culky says... Dear Timothy,
Spread Tippex on your teeth, then show your white glistening pearls to your mum before you go to bed.

Culky also says...
Spread a little more on in the morning, and take a couple of days off school. Tell the headmaster you've been away having new teeth put in! Sorted or what?

Dear Mr Culk,
I wonder if you could help me? My physics teacher reckons she'll put me in detention if I can't explain the following theory on relativity: if a mass (m) approaches the speed of light (c), its mass increases by a factor of (m), thus, as infinite velocity is attained, mass increases at the rate of (m+m+m etc...).
Where does this extra mass come from?
Peter Pertwee, Coventry

Culky says...
The increased mass comes from the fact that your head now weighs the following: (what it used to) + (Culk's left hook) x (the speed you fall to the floor).

Culky also says...
STAY IN COVENTRY PAL! ...Colin don't like Physitions, nor does mi mum nither.

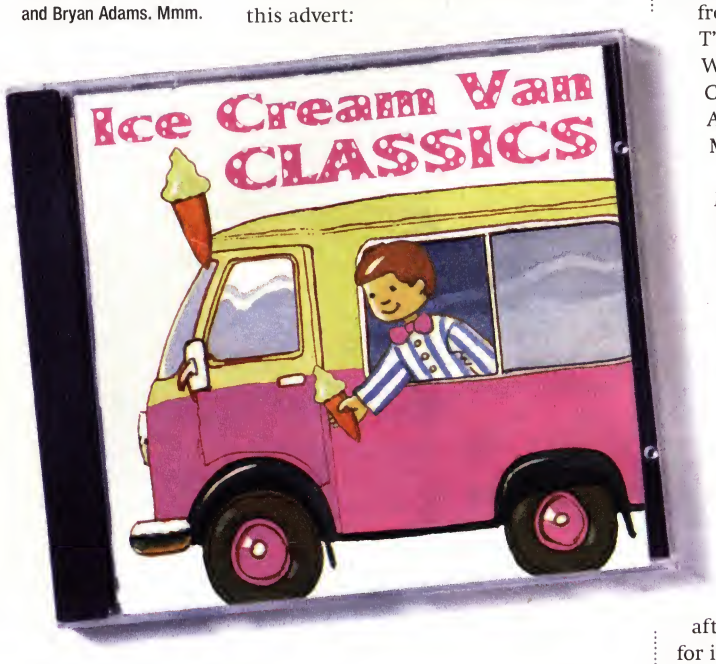
Mr Cursor

He's afraid of... panpipes and the Bush Coconut

(Below) All the hits and more on Mr Cursor FM – (ie *Ice Cream Van Classics*) – and eat your Mr Whippy to the happening sounds of T'Pau, Chris De Burgh and Bryan Adams. Mmm.

JUST WHO IS IT THAT BUYS ENYA albums? Personally I'd like to believe that nobody does, but bizarrely enough, they do. And they're actually *real* people! So who *are* these sad pathetic folk?

Well, I think I know... I was messing about with sound samples on my PC the other day and Channel Four was blaring away on the TV in the corner of the room. It was three in the afternoon and the film was interrupted with this advert:



"Following the huge success of Panpipe Moods, *we now bring you* Panpipe Moods 2... *classic rock and pop tracks recreated, especially for you, on panpipes!"*

Yaaargh! Yaaargh! So those who bought *Panpipe Moods* (and would soon be buying *Panpipe Moods 2*, if my theory is correct), I reckon are the same punters who buy Enya albums. Incidentally, these people were also in the middle of watching a black and white 1963 British 'family drama' starring Nanette Newman and Hayley Mills when the ad came on. QED, non?

But here's some synchronicity for you. At the very moment the aforementioned *Panpipe Moods* advert was airing, I inadvertently stumbled upon a 'chime' sound on my PC. It was the exact tone that an ice cream van makes. And this got me thinking. I suddenly realised that people who are stupid enough to like Enya songs, panpipes and Nanette Newman movies might also be interested in ice cream van music. Yes, yes, yes!

Mr Cursor spots a niche...

It's not quite finished yet as I've still got five tracks to mix, but can I interest anybody in *Ice Cream Van Classics*? No? It's a double album with a simulated 16-piece ice cream van orchestra pumping out tune after tune after tune from the artists you love: Meatloaf, T'Pau, Europe, Bryan Adams, Wet Wet Wet, Sting, Annie Lennox, Chris De Burgh, Mariah Carey, Mike And The Mechanics... AND MORE! MORE! MORE!

Only available on compact disc, *Ice Cream Van Classics* costs a mere £9.99! Send your money (cash only) to Mr Cursor at the usual *PC Zone* address and allow, erm, nine billion years for delivery.

If you're on a roll, continue...

Phew. Not bad, eh? A bona fide earner. And, regardless of the popular adage, there's nothing wrong with continuing when you're on a winning streak. So, while I'm this far ahead, I may as well design a computer game. I'll stick to the same Thursday afternoon's output on Channel Four for inspiration. (Why change a winning formula?) Here we go...

After the appalling Nanette Newman film there was a genuinely brilliant programme: an Aussie import called *The Bush Tucker Man*. In case you've never seen it, a brief explanation might be in order. (1) There's a hardy Aussie army bloke. (2) He's accompanied by a cameraman. (3) They go bush, like *big-time*. (4) Sometimes their Land Rover breaks down, so they walk. (5) Whether the Land Rover is working or not, *The Bush Tucker Man* shows the audience (us) how to survive with no provisions – in places with names like Death Mountain, Skeleton Crossing, No Hope Bay, Last Breath Flats and Bastard Valley. He does this by eating wood stuff. And more. Here are some of his educational asides...

"See this bloke? He's a Bush Almond. Great tucker! He's got three times the energy content of beef steak!"

"See this string? It's 'bush string'. I made it out of bark!"

"This little bloke here's a sand crab, and you can use him for bait. But if you're exhausted and unable to move, you can just stick him straight in the billy. Superb tucker."

"This here feller's a wallie plum. He doesn't taste too good, but when you're hungry I giss you'll have a go at jist about anything!"

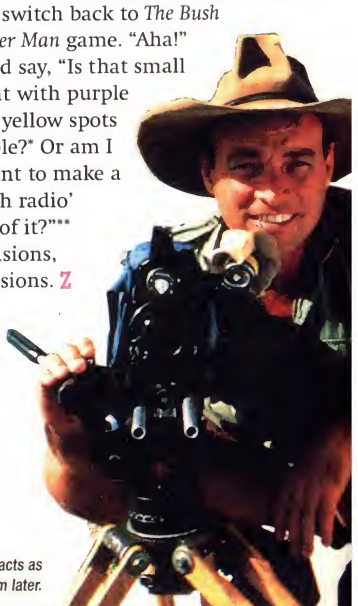
"All these creeks are named after people who died in the area. This one here's called Ned Creek. What I can't understand is how a bloke could die with so much tucker around." *(He points at some yummy looking sand to illustrate.)*

"This feller's the Bush Coconut. He contains Sapanin. You can stun fish with him. And if you want a wash just crack him open and he makes a fair dinkum soap as well!"

"You're probably wondering why I swam so fast across that river back there. The answer is that it's full of crocs!" *(It's true, I swear it.)*

And so on. *The Bush Tucker Man* is completely and utterly hard. In one episode he even made a canoe out of a tree – using tools he'd made out of, ahem, a *fish*. Honest! Really!

The Bush Tucker Man computer game would be simple yet compelling, just like the TV show. With *Robinson's Requiem*-style graphics your task would be to cross Australia on foot, without dying. And it'd make a great Windows game. Just point your on-screen persona in the required direction, press the 'walk' key, and then switch back to whatever other application you were previously running. Whenever you heard groaning sounds you'd know it was time to lose the spreadsheet and switch back to *The Bush Tucker Man* game. "Aha!" you'd say, "Is that small plant with purple and yellow spots edible?* Or am I meant to make a 'bush radio' out of it?"** Decisions, decisions. Z



(Right) You're probably wondering who our intrepid explorer over here is, sport – well it's Bush Tucker Man, the only person able to construct a rescue helicopter out of koala droppings. (Honest.)

* It's deadly. Ingestion causes the blood to solidify.

** *Its scent attracts the wooloowoo moth, which secretes a substance that acts as an anti-venom agent against the bite of the Gangrene Beetle. You'll meet him later.*

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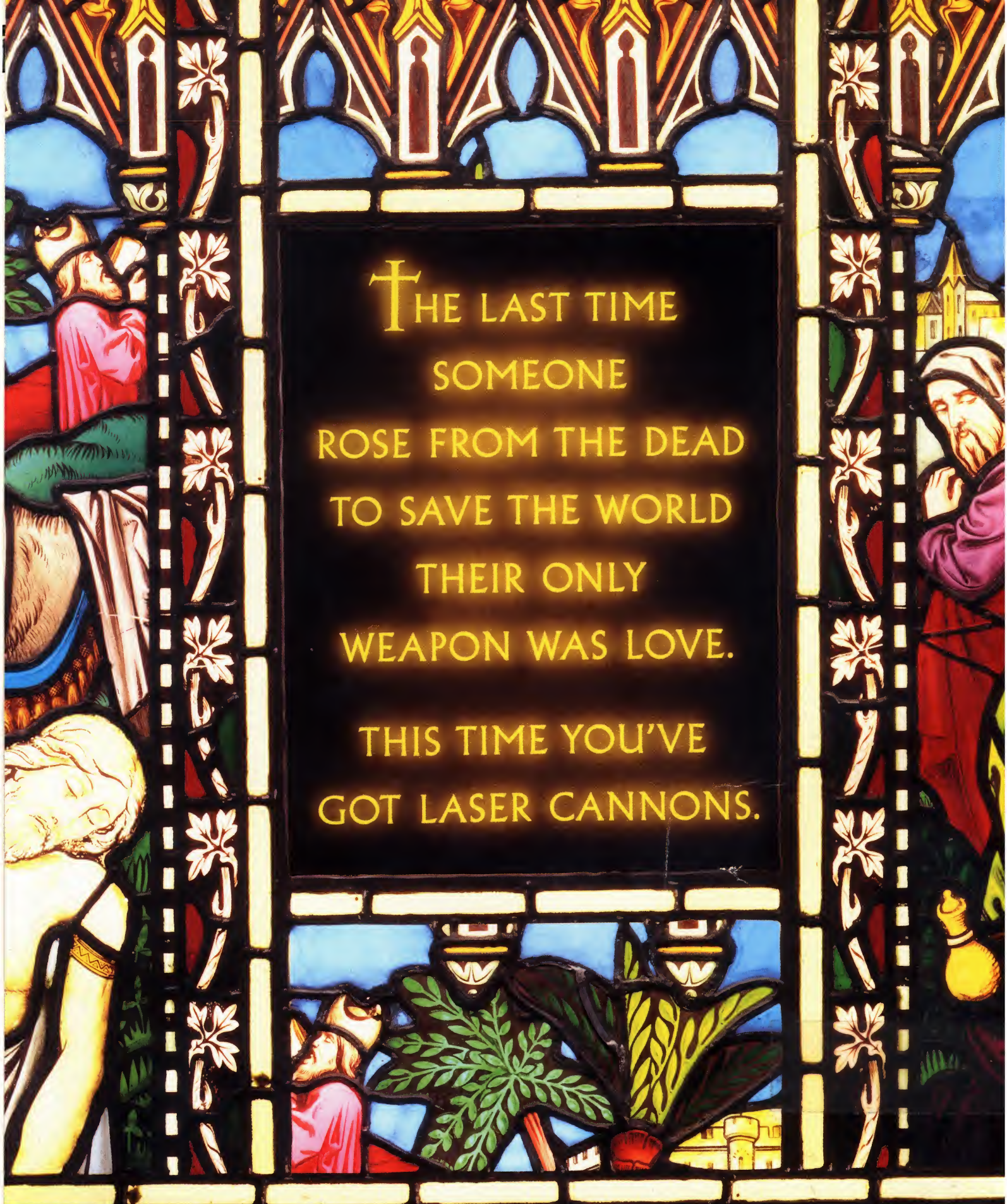

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